

AN AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT || HAMILTON'S BROADWAY REVOLUTION

ERIC FONER

ALISA SOLOMON

DOUBLE ISSUE

THE Nation.

150



Can Hillary Win Over the Left?

*She's spent decades seeking
refuge in the center. Will
progressives embrace her now?*

Michelle Goldberg

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March 6, 1986:
Georgia O'Keeffe Dies



The End of Water

Sasha Abramsky's "Life on the Wrong Side of the Drought" [August 3/10] is excellent in many ways. His description of people in poverty who suffer from lack of water is priceless.

But alack! He undermines his article with one gargantuan and egregious omission: animal agriculture. California's meat and dairy industries suck up 47 percent of the state's water. It's a staggering amount used for livestock: 4.8 trillion gallons per year, drop by drop by drop. But Abramsky doesn't drop one word about factory farming in his article. That's a very huge elephant he's ignoring.

GENE GORDON
WALNUT CREEK, CALIF.

☞ The State of California should start aggressively enforcing the public-trust doctrine, a well-established common-law principle that imbues the state with a fiduciary duty to protect public resources (e.g., water) from being wasted or damaged. It is the public-trust doctrine that saved Mono Lake from being drained by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power in the '80s. Three years into the worst drought in 1,200 years, the public-trust doctrine can and must prevent wealthy corporate farms and frackers from sucking dry and contaminating the aquifers that Californians depend on for their drinking water.

ERICA ETELSON

☞ This is possibly the best piece I've seen so far on the California drought. So many people are in total denial as long as they don't see the photos of dead orange groves, the Sierra reservoirs dry, etc. I'm a native of Southern California and have seen the pattern over my 57 years; this is far beyond anything in the past.

WALTER PEWEN

A Nuclear Double Standard

While many of the points raised in the editorial "Breakthrough With Iran" [August 3/10] are well stated, there is a fundamental aspect that is missing with regard to nuclear proliferation. It is essential to put into perspective that the United States has the world's largest nuclear stockpile, and I don't believe that our government allows the regular inspections that it now demands of Iran. Meanwhile, Israel—the only country in the Middle East that has its own nuclear weapons—doesn't even acknowledge their existence, much less permit inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

How can the United States demand all these restrictions on other nations' nuclear development when America is the only nation to have ever used these weapons, unleashing unspeakable, horrific destruction on the Japanese people?

For other nations to seek to develop nuclear weapons in the face of the existing stockpiles, including the known Israeli arsenal, only seems understandable. So, until the existing nuclear nations acknowledge the overriding need to eliminate these weapons from their own arsenals and actively work to achieve that end, there will continue to be nations that seek to develop them.

MIKE STEIN
NEW YORK

Sharing the Austerity

Here's a thought inspired by Sarah Leonard's "Ideological Bankruptcy" [August 3/10]: After World War I, Georges Clémenceau forced austerity on Germany, leading to the enormous inflation of the early 1920s and the unintended consequence of Hitler's rise to power.

☞ Comments drawn from our website

letters@thenation.com

(continued on page 26)

Open It Up, Dems!

The Democratic National Committee needs to adapt to the new politics of 2016. Instead of constraining debate, as it has so far, the DNC should change course and encourage an open and freewheeling discourse. This is not just the right choice; it's the politically practical thing to do.

Like it or not, the 2016 campaign is in full swing, and Americans are engaging with it. A record-breaking 24 million viewers tuned in to watch the August 6 GOP debate—more Americans than voted in all of the Republican primaries and caucuses of 2012 combined. It's easy to dismiss these debates as “clown car” spectacles, considering the atrocious statements coming from Donald Trump and his apprentices. Yet since that first debate, Trump and other Republicans have seen their numbers spike in polls pairing them against anticipated Democratic opponents in 2016.

Democrats are making a serious mistake if they imagine that they'll somehow benefit by letting the Republicans claim center stage as summer gives way to fall. And activists who want to hear serious discussions of issues too frequently neglected by Republicans—from mass incarceration to climate change to nuclear disarmament to expanding Social Security and saving the Postal Service—should be outraged by the prospect that Democrats will not have enough debates, or enough flexibility, to fully explore these vital issues.

It's not enough that Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Martin O'Malley, Lincoln Chafee, and Jim Webb are campaigning (or that Joe Biden is pondering). The Republican candidates are *debating*—and far more Americans tune in to debates than attend events on the campaign trail.

As it stands now, the Democrats have scheduled just six debates, as opposed to the dozen proposed by the GOP. Even more absurd is the fact that the first Democratic debate is set for mid-October, more than two months after the Republicans got started.

It's no surprise that the loudest objections to the DNC's approach come from candidates seeking a debate boost. Sanders says it's “imperative that

we have as many debates as possible—certainly more than six.” O'Malley complains that the current schedule is “all about trying to preordain the outcome, circle the wagons, and close off debate.” Sanders and O'Malley both object to a DNC rule that says candidates who participate in unsanctioned debates can be barred from the DNC's official events.

Reckless partisans may assume that a limited schedule will benefit the current front-runner, Hillary Clinton. But that's a bad gamble. Of course, the DNC's proposed schedule is rough for O'Malley, whose strategy depends on multiple debates to draw attention to a campaign that is serious but still polls in the single digits. It's also rough for Sanders, who needs strong debate performances to build on the momentum of his double-digit poll numbers and rallies that have attracted tens of thousands. But a restricted debate schedule is bad for Clinton as well: She can't keep ceding the limelight to Republicans, who devote so much of their time and energy to attacking her on everything from e-mails to economics.

Clinton can benefit from pressure from her fellow Democrats, both when it comes to countering criticisms—some petty, some serious—and when it comes to developing the populist message that voters want to hear.

The Democratic debates don't have to be as theatrical as the GOP's Trump-dominated affairs. But the DNC needs to get started sooner, and it needs to support more debates in more states. That's good for all the candidates. And it's good for democracy—especially in an increasingly unpredictable and volatile political season, when the discourse should not be dominated by a single party.

JOHN NICHOLS



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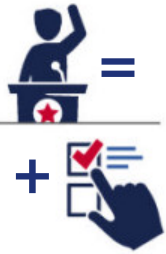
André Naffis-Sahely

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DC BY THE NUMBERS



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Democratic primary debates in the 2004 election

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"The number of presidential debates should be dictated by voters, not the Democrats in Washington."

Martin O'Malley, Democratic presidential candidate and former governor of Maryland

An American Birthright

Republicans are fighting a bedrock GOP principle.

Birthright citizenship—the principle that any person born in the United States is automatically a citizen—has been embedded in the Constitution since the ratification of the 14th Amendment in 1868. This summer, it has suddenly emerged as a major issue in the Republican presidential campaign. Following the lead of Donald Trump, candidates like Rick Santorum, Bobby Jindal, Ted Cruz, and Rand Paul have called for the repeal or reinterpretation of the amendment, to prevent children born to undocumented immigrants from being recognized as American citizens.

The situation abounds in ironies. Now a Republican target, the 14th Amendment was for many decades considered a crowning achievement of what once called itself the party of Lincoln. Today, moreover, birthright citizenship stands as an example of the much-abused idea of American exceptionalism, which Republicans have berated President Obama for supposedly not embracing. Many things claimed as uniquely American—a devotion to individual freedom, for example, or social opportunity—exist in other countries. But birthright citizenship does make the United States (along with Canada) unique in the developed world. No European nation recognizes the principle. Yet, oddly, those most insistent on proclaiming their belief in American exceptionalism seem keenest on abolishing it.

Why is birthright citizenship part of our Constitution? Until after the Civil War, there existed no commonly agreed-upon definition of American citizenship or the rights that it entailed. The original Constitution mentioned citizens but did not delineate who they were. The individual states determined the boundaries and rights of citizenship.

The Constitution does, however, empower Congress to create a system of naturalization, and a law of 1790 offered the first legislative definition of American nationality. Although the new nation proclaimed itself, in the words of Thomas Paine, an "asylum for mankind," that law restricted the process of becoming a citizen from abroad to any "free white person." Thus, at the outset, ideas of American citizenship were closely linked to race.

Slaves, of course, were not part of the body politic. But in 1860, there were half a million free blacks in the United States, nearly all of them born in this country. For decades, their citizenship had been hotly contested. Finally, in the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857, the Supreme Court declared that no black person could be a citizen. The framers of the Constitution, Chief Justice Roger Taney insisted, regarded blacks, free and slave, as "beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race...and so far inferior, that they had no

rights which the white man was bound to respect." (This statement, the Radical Republican leader Thaddeus Stevens later remarked, "damned [Taney] to everlasting fame; and, I fear, to everlasting fire.")

The destruction of slavery in the Civil War, coupled with the service of 200,000 black men in the Union Army and Navy, put the question of black citizenship on the national agenda. The era of Reconstruction produced the first formal delineation of American citizenship, a vast expansion of citizens' rights, and a repudiation of the idea that these rights attached to persons in their capacity as members of certain ethnic or racial groups, rather than as part of an undifferentiated American people. Birthright citizenship is one expression of the commitment to equality and the expansion of national consciousness that marked Reconstruction.

In June 1866, Congress approved and sent to the states the 14th Amendment, whose opening section declares that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein

they reside." What persons are not subject to national jurisdiction? The debates in Congress in 1866 make clear that the language was meant to exclude Native Americans, still considered members of their tribal sovereignties. Two minuscule other groups were mentioned: children born in the United States to the wives of foreign diplomats, and those fathered by members of occupying

armies (fortunately, the latter case hasn't arisen since the amendment's ratification).

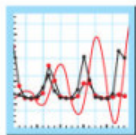
While the immediate purpose of this part of the 14th Amendment was to invalidate the *Dred Scott* decision, the language says nothing about race—it was meant to establish a principle applicable to all. Opponents raised the specter of Chinese citizenship, or citizenship for "gypsies"; one senator said that he'd heard more about gypsies during the debate than in his entire previous life. Lyman Trumbull, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, made it crystal clear that "all persons" meant what it said: Children born to Chinese, gypsies, or anybody else one could think of would be citizens.

What about the children of "illegal aliens" today? No such group existed in 1866; at the time, just about anyone who wished to enter the United States was free to do so. Only later did the law single out certain groups for exclusion: prostitutes, polygamists, lunatics, anarchists, and, starting in 1882, the entire population of China. In fact, the closest analogy to today's debate concerns children born to the 50,000 or so Chinese in the United States in 1866, all of whose parents were ineligible for citizenship. The authors of the amendment, and subsequent decisions by the Supreme Court, made it clear that these children must be considered American citizens. The legal status of the parents does not determine the rights of the child; anyone born here can be a good American. These are the principles the Republicans now seek to overturn.

The 14th Amendment, as Republican editor George Curtis wrote, was part of a process that changed the US government from one "for white men" to one "for man-

Citizenship for those born here is a uniquely worthy ideal.

COMMENT



THE SCORE/BRYCE COVERT + MIKE KONCZAL

Relax or Collapse

The *New York Times* recently shocked us with the gritty details of Amazon's high-stress workplace. There are many ways the company amps up the pressure—encouraging anonymous complaints against coworkers, regularly culling the ranks, and relentlessly tracking performance. But one tactic is familiar to many American workers: long hours. “You can work long, hard, or smart, but at Amazon.com you can’t choose two out of three,” CEO Jeff Bezos told shareholders in 1997.

Republicans, far from pushing back against the demand for endless hours, have encouraged Americans to work *more*. “People need to work longer hours and, through their productivity, gain more income for their families,” Jeb Bush said, explaining how he’d get to 4 percent yearly economic growth. (He later backpedaled by claiming that he only meant those who aren’t getting as many hours as they want.)

Contrast that with the Obama administra-

tion, which recently announced a proposal to significantly increase the number of Americans who have to be paid overtime when they work more than 40 hours a week. While that will mean more money for some, it will also mean that others are sent home when they hit the 40-hour mark, which will allow them to benefit from “an equally precious gift, the gift of time,” as Labor Secretary Thomas Perez put it.

Who’s right?

By international standards, Americans put in a lot of time on the job. Among countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, we’re above the average, clocking 1,789 hours at work in a year—more than Japan, Germany, and South Korea. Each week, the average American puts in 41 hours per week, compared to 38.4 in the United Kingdom, 36.9 in Germany, and just 32.7 in

the Netherlands. We also have more workaholics: The percentage of US workers who put in more than 45 hours a week is about double that of Germany, the Netherlands, or France. While we’ve decreased our workload by 112 hours a year over the past four decades, other countries have far outpaced us: The French dropped theirs by 491 hours, the Dutch by 425 and the Canadians by 215.

Even so, it doesn’t mean we’re getting a whole lot more done. The countries putting in the least time at work are generally the most productive. Greeks work about 600 more hours a year than Germans do, but German productivity is 70 percent higher. The amount of growth in the gross domestic product for each hour that Americans work has increased by 1.7 percent since 1970—less than the increases in all of the Nordic countries, where people work *fewer* hours.

Moreover, all studies of actual workers indicate that while working more might produce an initial boost, we burn out pretty quickly and don’t recover until we take a break. One study found that those who put in 55 hours a week performed worse at cognitive functions than those who worked 40

hours. Another found that workers can achieve a small boost by putting in more than 60 hours, but that it only lasts three to four weeks and then falls off. Putting in weeks of overtime eventually reduces productivity, which doesn’t bounce back. After eight 60-hour weeks, productivity is hurt so badly that it would’ve been better simply to stay with a 40-hour week the whole time. One woman who spoke anonymously about her time at Amazon described being forced to leave work by her fiancé every evening at 10 p.m. and doing work every day of her vacation. “That’s when the ulcer started,” she said. She no longer works there.

Sadly, Americans aren’t benefiting from all that research. Our average workweek is nearly a whole workday longer than the 40-hour one that researchers say is most beneficial. Ninety-four percent of profes-

sional workers log 50 hours a week or more. There are certainly plenty of people in the United States who would like more hours at work: 6.3 million are working part time but want to be full time. Others would like more consistent hours, particularly in areas like retail, where schedules can change without warning. But the overall picture is that Americans are working incredibly hard without seeing more pay or a stronger economy.

BRYCE COVERT

Putting in weeks of overtime eventually reduces productivity, which doesn’t bounce back.

Dear Amazon: You Know This, Right?

- 1 The average work-week in the US is nearly a whole workday longer than 40 hours.

94% of professionals work 50 hours or more



55 hours

Cognitive functions are worse than at 40 hours

2

BUT that doesn’t make us more productive.



60 hours

Productivity boost lasts only 3–4 weeks, then falls off

60 hours

After 8 weeks, productivity is worse than having worked a 40-hour schedule for that same period



- 3 At that point, even a vacation doesn’t restore productivity.

NEW MEDIA

Succor to the Suffering Adjunct

Finally, the itinerant adjunct-professor community has a hometown paper—wherever “home” may be.

Founded by Dushko Petrovich, a New Yorker who travels to teaching jobs in three other states, the *Adjunct Commuter Weekly* addresses “the lifestyle needs and shared interests of a rapidly growing and increasingly influential demographic”—adjunct professors, the creation of our privatized universities’ collapsing tenure system. The publication’s



design is a parody (or perhaps the reality?) of those terrible departmental-newsletter aesthetics: the shaded box, the clip art, the blurry professional head shot. Its highly entertaining, rage-tinged poetry, essays, and surrealist fiction about the adjunct life will distract a precarious professional from grading on the Greyhound all the way from New Haven to Boston. Noting the swelling ranks of educators without healthcare and often living below the poverty line, ACW has political aims, too: “Ads” point to advocacy organizations fighting for improved working conditions and affordable housing.

In the meantime, ACW hopes to provide succor to the suffering adjunct. Or, in Petrovich’s words, “as the business people hoist up their folded *Financial Times* to shield their faces, I want you to have a newsprint privacy curtain, too. Hold up your *Adjunct Commuter Weekly* and rest.”

—Sarah Leonard

kind.” Birthright citizenship is one legacy of the titanic struggle of the Reconstruction era to create a genuine democracy grounded in the principle of equality. It remains an eloquent statement of what our country is or would like to be. We should think long and hard before abandoning it. **ERIC FONER**

Eric Foner is the DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University and a member of The Nation's editorial board. He is the author, most recently, of Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad.

The Neocon Game

They're staging a comeback—with Bibi's help.

This occasional election-season column will focus on the deeper disorders of our politics—those evaded or actively concealed by the money-drenched campaigns.

One of the hardest-fought battles early in the current presidential campaign is the showdown between Benjamin Netanyahu and Barack Obama over who runs US foreign policy. Neither man, of course, will be on the ballot next year, but if Bibi succeeds in defeating Barack’s nuclear deal with Iran, it will cast a long, dark shadow over the presidential contenders and the prospects for war or peace.

This is not the first time the Israeli prime minister has bluntly intruded on US politics, making common cause with the Republican Party’s relentless efforts to demean and disparage the American president. Together, Bibi and the GOP are now trying to poison public opinion concerning the deal and to stifle informed debate on its merits and long-term implications.

Since the start of his presidency, Obama has attempted, in his halting way, to shift the world’s only remaining superpower from its combative military posture in the Middle East and elsewhere toward more patient diplomacy. Instead of blunt force, he has sought new relationships with some old adversaries. That monumental task is like trying to turn around a huge battleship in the midst of stormy seas.

If Obama’s deal is rejected, the door to greater restraint and balance in US foreign policy will be slammed shut. Iranian leaders, for their part, could reach a similar conclusion. With deal-making scrapped, Iran could race to develop a nuclear weapon before an Israeli strike aimed at destroying its nuclear facilities.

War-gaming scenarios developed during the last decade by strategic experts in Washington

haven’t received much attention in the political debate, but they involve ominous warnings. In 2009, the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution predicted that if attacked by Israel, Iran would counterattack against US allies, pulling Washington into a broader regional war.

Obama’s congressional critics dismiss such scenarios as highly unlikely, and maybe they’re right. Or perhaps they’re as wrong as they were back in 2003, when the United States invaded Iraq. Not only would the “shock and awe” bombing campaign make quick work of Saddam Hussein, they asserted, but the Iraqi people would greet American soldiers as liberators. Instead, the Bush administration’s plan for making over the Middle East turned into America’s—and the region’s—catastrophe. The armchair warriors in the Bush-Cheney gang were utterly discredited, disgraced by their own inflated egos and deliberate falsehoods.

But now the neocons are trying to stage a comeback, seeking redemption but selling the same old tough-guy doctrine. Without much notice, they have made themselves a driving force alongside the Israeli prime minister in his campaign to wreck Obama’s diplomatic opening.

I got a glimpse of these new-old tactics in a recent column by David Brooks of *The New York Times*. In his usual even-tempered style, Brooks discussed a seven-point analysis of the Iran deal by the Foreign Policy Initiative. Obama failed on all seven points, the sagacious columnist concluded. But what is the Foreign Policy Initiative? Brooks didn’t say. As it turns out, the FPI is composed of the same neocon apostles who sold us the Iraq

War. No wonder Brooks didn’t name any of them.

The Project for a New American Century, established in the 1990s as the original home base for neocon agitators, had long since fallen into utter disrepute. So the big thinkers shut down PNAC and repackaged themselves with a bland new title. But the FPI’s board of directors are the same guys: William Kristol, the editor of Murdoch’s *Weekly*

Standard (and Brooks’s old boss before he joined the *Times*); Robert Kagan, cofounder of PNAC (and a *Washington Post* columnist); Dan Senor, former spokesman for the Bush administration’s Coalition Provisional Authority in US-occupied Iraq; and Eric Edelman, Cheney’s national-security policy guy at the Pentagon and White House.

Kagan has been talking about military action against Iran since at least 2004. “Anyone who thinks that it is inconceivable that there could be a military option in Iran sometime down the road I think is making a mistake,” he declared. In 2014, he wrote a call to battle in *The New Republic* titled “Superpowers Don’t Get to Retire.”

Searching the web, one finds neocons pushing plenty of buttons to get a sufficiently belligerent



How to Cover Up the Pesticide Industry's GMO Scheme and New 2,4 D "Agent Orange" Crops

SLATE'S WILLIAM SALETAN SHOWS HOW IT'S DONE

DAVID BRONNER CEO, Dr. Bronner's

There's been no shortage of journalists of late flacking for the pesticide and junk food industries regarding genetically engineered foods, aka Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). This coincides with the massive industry PR push behind the Safe and Affordable Food Labeling (SAFE) Act, i.e. the Deny Americans the Right to Know (DARK) Act, which will stop states from requiring disclosure of GMO foods. Easily fooled and blind to their bias, these journalists focus on irrational or fringe elements in the movement to label GMO foods, celebrate commercially insignificant examples of GMOs, and cover up that over 90% of GMO food acreage is engineered by chemical companies to survive huge doses of

genetic engineering. I want to take you down into the details of four GMO fights, because that's where you'll find truth. You'll come to the last curtain, the one that hides the reality of the anti-GMO movement. And you'll see what's behind it."

He then spends 5,000 plus words discussing genetically engineered virus-resistant papaya that represents less than 0.001% of GMO crop acreage worldwide, and beta-carotene-enriched genetically engineered rice that represents exactly zero percent. Only at the end of the article does Saletan devote any attention to the real concern driving the modern GMO labeling movement: that pesticide companies are engineering major food crops to survive huge volumes of the toxic weed killers they sell. And even then he lays down pesticide industry spin that Glyphosate—

their killing power on bees, pollinators and other non-target wildlife. (See former EPA Senior Scientist Dr. Ray Seidler's "Pesticide Use on Genetically Engineered Crops.")

Up until 2011 I myself was a sucker for industry-fed propaganda served up by the likes of Saletan, that GMOs were mostly nutrient-enriched drought-tolerant yield-boosted crops that require less pesticides. But then the government deregulated "Round-Up Ready Alfalfa" and the charade was over: GMOs are about chemical companies engineering crops to tolerate huge doses of the weed killer they sell. Alfalfa isn't even generally sprayed with herbicide in the first place. A huge swath of the American public woke up to the fact that GMOs are really about pesticide companies selling pesticides, and the modern GMO labeling movement was born. Commercially insignificant GMOs like GMO papayas, rice, apples and potatoes are red herring distractions and not the issue. Herbicide-tolerant 2,4 D & Glyphosate food crops are what's for dinner and should be Exhibit A when discussing labeling GMOs. And regardless of potential risks, just as consumers have a right to know if orange juice is from concentrate or if vanilla is artificial, they have a right to know if food has been genetically engineered.

Journalists covering science, agriculture and food need to wake up to the influence and track record of the pesticide and junk food industries, and stand up for the public interest. These industries are desperately trying to force the DARK Act through Congress. This bill would pre-empt citizens' rights to enact mandatory GMO labeling, and its backers are counting on clueless journalists to help them do it. But hopefully our elected representatives will stand up for our simple right to know if our food is engineered to be saturated in toxic herbicide—a right citizens in 64 other countries already have.

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Paid for by Dr. Bronner's

Journalists covering science, agriculture and food need to wake up to the influence and track record of the pesticide and junk food industries, and stand up for the public interest.

weed killer. Rather than sound the alarm that the pesticide industry's new 2,4 D herbicide-tolerant GMO crops were recently greenlighted for planting this spring by industry-friendly regulators, these journalists bury the fact they are destined for our dinner plates this fall.

William Saletan of Slate, prominent spoon-fed banger of drums in support of war in Iraq, recently stepped up to show fellow media lackeys how best to swallow and regurgitate pesticide and junk food talking points on GMOs, and advised Americans they don't need to know what they eat and feed their families. In his article, "Unhealthy Fixation" Saletan states:

"If you're like me, you don't really want to wade into this issue. It's too big, technical, and confusing. But come with me, just this once. I want to take you backstage, behind those blanket assurances about the safety of

the main herbicide GMOs are engineered to tolerate whose use has skyrocketed on food—is "safer," even though the World Health Organization determined earlier this year that Glyphosate is a "probable carcinogen" (which he alludes to only by hyperlink without explicitly stating and interfering with his argument.) Even more egregiously, he fails to state that the pesticide industry's next generation "stacked" herbicide-tolerant GMO crops also tolerate huge amounts of 2,4 D, an older toxic herbicide that composed one-half of the dioxin-contaminated defoliant Agent Orange.

Saletan also blithely asserts that genetically engineered Bt insecticide in GMO corn has led to a reduction of insecticide use, failing to mention that use of systemic neonicotinoid insecticides on GMO corn has skyrocketed from zero to almost 100% in the past twelve years—insecticides which are banned in the EU due to

Of the GOP's 2016 presidential contenders, only Rand Paul and Donald Trump have thus far failed to drink the neocon Kool-Aid.

Republican elected in 2016. A new group calling itself the John Hay Initiative is tutoring Republican candidates on foreign policy. It claims to be nonpolitical, but the three “educators” are neocons. In addition to Edelman, they include Eliot Cohen, former aide to Bush’s deputy defense secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, who claims to be one of the first neocons to advocate war against both Iraq and Iran; and lawyer Brian Hook, who warns that weak foreign policy “always carries a high price tag.”

These three say that they’ve already written speeches for Carly Fiorina and Chris Christie and briefed Jeb Bush, Scott Walker, Marco Rubio, Rick Perry, Ted Cruz, Lindsey Graham, and several others. Only Rand Paul and Donald Trump have thus far failed to drink the neocon Kool-Aid.

Neocons started feeling better about themselves right after the 2014 elections, when the GOP captured the Senate. Kristol said that he sensed “more willingness to rethink” the neocon dogma, which was “vindicated to some degree” by Obama’s alleged weakness. The FPI held a postelection conference last December called “A World in Crisis,” with kindred spirits expressing their worries. The speakers included Robert Kagan; Senator Bob Corker, now chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, who is leading the opposition to the Iran deal;

Fred Hiatt, editorial-page editor at *The Washington Post*; and Senators John McCain, Ted Cruz, and Tom Cotton, the Arkansas freshman who’s made a name for himself saber rattling against Iran. (Cotton boasts that US bombing “can set them back to day zero.”)

Despite the lies and spectacular failures, the neocon fantasy still appeals to many citizens because it manipulates patriotic emotions deep in the American psyche: the fear of distant others and our national sense of injured innocence. Why do others hate us when we are only trying to do good for the world? To answer that question to their liking, neocon thinkers are required to blot out large chunks of our history that contradict American self-pity.

Not to pick on David Brooks, but his supposedly evenhanded style is a model of misleading readers by evading the facts. After his column runs through the Iran agreement in a dispassionate manner, he concludes with hot-blooded propaganda. Iran, he announces, is led by “a fanatical, hegemonic, hate-filled regime.” Once his readers accept that as true, argument is over.

Except that Iranian leaders say much the same about us. And if Brooks had inquired a little more deeply, his facile propaganda would be contradicted by bloody facts with which many Americans are unfamiliar.

In August 1953, the CIA arranged a mob-driven coup in Tehran that toppled the elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, after he moved to nationalize the country’s vast oil fields, then controlled by the major US and British oil companies. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was installed as the American puppet, and he governed Iran for a quarter of a century, keeping domestic dissidents in check with SAVAK, his brutal secret police.

A *New York Times* editorial in August 1954 described the importance of this act of US imperialism: “Costly as the dispute over Iranian oil has been to all concerned, the affair may yet be proved worthwhile, if lessons are learned from it. Underdeveloped countries with rich resources now have an object lesson in the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their number which goes berserk with fanatical nationalism.”

The revolution that toppled the shah in 1979 installed a reactionary government of Islamist clerics, not the left-wing communists feared by Washington’s Cold War strategists in 1953. Note the ironic similarity in the US accusations: The *Times* warned against Iran’s “fanatical nationalism” in 1954; six decades later, a *Times* columnist warns us to fear Iran’s “fanatical, hegemonic, hate-filled regime.”

As Obama suggests, perhaps it’s time to let go of the past. **WILLIAM GREIDER**

COMIX NATION

Jen Sorensen



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BACK ISSUES/1993

Hillary's Complicated Gambit



In May of 1993, *The Nation* published its first piece about Hillary Clinton. In "The Male Media's Hillary Problem," Katha Pollitt wrote that she was "no fan of Hillary Rodham Clinton's politics," but she also criticized those male journalists who took out their own career anxieties on the first lady:

"It's funny how those who recoil at Hillary's position in the Administration return to the old comic view of marriage, in which any husband more congenial than Genghis Khan is assumed to be putty in the hands of his wife, and any wife less demure than Pat Nixon is assumed to be a shrew.... In women, power is always seen as sexual. That's why people can half-believe all the rumors about Hillary, mutually exclusive though they be: let's see, a lamp-throwing lesbian who enslaves her husband by refusing to exercise on his person the amazing sexual power she has over him despite his appetite for other women, with which she is blackmailing him. All this in order to run a policy-wonkery show trial, whose verdict—managed competition, yes!—was in at the start. You'd think the paragon who could pull off this complicated gambit would hold out for Secretary of State."

Pollitt's essay will appear in our forthcoming collection of classic *Nation* editorials, essays, and investigations about Hillary Clinton, with an introduction, of course, by Katha Pollitt.

—Richard Kreitner

Katha Pollitt



Come Out, Pro-Choicers!

Even if you haven't had an abortion, you owe Planned Parenthood.

Nearly one in three women in the United States will have had at least one abortion by the time they reach menopause. Some will have had more than one. Where are they? In a recent piece on the *New York Times* op-ed page, I called on them to break their silence. Thanks to clandestine videos produced by the Center for Medical Progress, an anti-abortion outfit, Planned Parenthood is in its hour of need. Independent clinics all over the country are closing due to laws that purport to protect patient safety but are actually intended to put clinics out of business. Ostracism, death threats, bombings, and arson are driving providers out of the field and discouraging new ones from entering it. Restrictions intended to shame women and raise the cost of abortions are heaping up. As Rabbi Hillel famously asked, "If not now, when?"

It didn't take long for pro-choice activists to remind me that many women cannot tell their story. They would be disowned by their families, shunned in their communities, beaten by their men, and subject to all kinds of harassment, online and off. At Cosmopolitan.com, Renee Bracey Sherman writes, "We cannot ask people to share a vulnerable story when the atmosphere is filled with so much vitriol." Point taken—there are reasons why people keep their secrets. Stigma works. After all, there are still plenty of gay men and lesbians who are in the closet, or are out to some people but not others. Sherman reminds us that we can't put everything on the backs of women who have had abortions: "We cannot eradicate abortion stigma without the support of those whom society deems 'good' mothers because they didn't choose abortion."

So, to clarify: I would never suggest that any woman endanger her safety or livelihood to tell her abortion story. But there are plenty of women for whom the stakes are nowhere near so high. After my op-ed came out, I got a number of e-mails, some from women explaining why they were silent, but also from women declaring that now they would go public. One in three women

is a lot of people. Don't all political movements, at some level, ask people to get out of their comfort zones and be a little brave?

I also don't mean to suggest that *only* women who have had abortions have a responsibility here. If you or your child or your boyfriend (8 percent of Planned Parenthood's patients are men) ever visited a Planned Parenthood clinic for birth control or STI treatment, you owe them. If you have had sex without intending pregnancy; or a pregnancy scare that didn't send you completely over the wall; or made education,

career, or life plans that depended on postponing childbearing, you owe Planned Parenthood, because undergirding all of those choices is the ready availability of birth control and abortion, whether or not you think you would actually end an ill-timed pregnancy.

For women who have had abortions, storytelling is just one possibility. If you can't tell your story, you can still stand up for reproductive rights. You can talk to your friends and neighbors about the issues; you can vote for pro-choice candidates (anti-choicers are much more likely than pro-choicers to be single-issue voters, which is one reason we are where we are today); you can stay on top of the news—I meet so many pro-choice people who think this issue doesn't affect them, because they live in a blue state. You can lobby your state legislature about the millions of tax dollars pouring into so-called crisis pregnancy centers. You can switch to a pro-choice church. You can write a thank-you note to your abortion provider. If every woman who received care from Planned Parenthood put just \$10 in an envelope every year and mailed it to their local affiliate, that would be a game changer. If



Don't all political movements, at some level, ask people to get out of their comfort zones and be a little brave?

\$10 is too much, how about \$5? Or \$1?

Here are the last three verses of “An Open Letter to 21 Million Women,” written in 1988, 15 years after the *Roe v. Wade* decision, by B.J. Isaacson-Jones, who ran an abortion clinic in St. Louis for many years. This year, *Roe* turns 42, and her words are truer today than ever. The full version is available at TheNation.com/prochoice.

You broke our hearts.

You had just celebrated your twelfth birthday when you came to us. You clutched your teddy bear, sucked your thumb and cried out for your mom who asked you why you had gotten yourself pregnant. You replied that you just wanted to be grown.

You're twenty today.

Where are you?

I pretend I don't know you in the market, at social gatherings and on the street.

I told you I would.

After your procedure you told me that you would fight for reproductive choices (parenthood, adoption, and abortion) for your mother, daughters, and grandchildren. You will... won't you?

I have no regrets. I care about

each and every one of you and

treasure all that you've taught me.

But I'm angry. I can't do this alone.

I'm not asking you to speak about your abortion, but You need to speak out and you need to speak out now. Where are you? ■



In retrospect, it was a mistake to put Hillary Clinton in charge of the Ashley Madison server.

@HeerJeet,
Jeet Heer,
senior editor,
The New Republic

SNAPSHOT/TATAN SYUFLANA

The Long Climb to Freedom

Indonesian men scale greased poles to retrieve bicycles, rice cookers, and other prizes as part of the Independence Day celebrations in Jakarta on August 17, 2015, when Indonesia marked the 70th anniversary of its declaration of independence from Dutch colonial rule.



Calvin Trillin Deadline Poet

CHRIS CHRISTIE, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

When thinking now of poor Chris Christie,
My heart goes out. My eyes grow misty.
The White House door to him was shut,
'Twas said, unless he lost that gut.
So bariatric work was done.
He dropped some weight—though not a ton,
Enough at least so he could chase
That White House dream. He's in the race.
But he's got problems in his state,
And Bridgegate came to demonstrate
That some of Christie's straight-talk luster
Was based on just a bully's bluster.
So now, despite his smaller tum,
He's near the bottom of the scrum.
What must, I'm thinking, make him frown
Is all the food that he turned down—
The sausage pizzas he rejected
So, slimmer, he could be elected,
The hamburgers he could have bought
But didn't. Was that all for naught?
When thinking now of poor Chris Christie,
My heart goes out. My eyes grow misty.

The Nation.

Can Hillary Win Over the Left?

*She's spent decades
seeking refuge
in the center.
Will progressives
embrace her now?*

by MICHELLE GOLDBERG



EARLIER THIS YEAR, BUZZFEED UNCOVERED A 1979 TELEVISION INTERVIEW WITH HILLARY Clinton—then Hillary Rodham—who had just become first lady of Arkansas. In the half-hour video, we see a young woman in oversize glasses, calm and smiling as the host grills her about whether she's too liberal, too feminist, too career-oriented to fit into her new role. The host tells her that she probably cost her husband votes by keeping her last name. (She would later give in and change it.) "You're not a native," he says. "You've been educated in liberal Eastern universities. You're less than 40. You don't have any children.... You practice law." (She assures him that she and Bill plan to have children and adds, "I'm not 40, but that hopefully will be cured by age.") After nearly 20 minutes of this sort of thing, the host asks Clinton what she finds attractive about Arkansas—

a place to which, her biographers have made clear, she moved with great reluctance to further her husband's political career. Outsiders, he notes, complain that "We're so unprogressive here. We're just not as progressive as they are up North." Appearing eager to finally ingratiate herself, she replies by pouring scorn on urban America: "You know, if it's progress to default on your bond obligations so that your city's going into bankruptcy, or if it's progress to have such an incredible crime rate that people don't venture outside their doors, or if it's progress to live in a city whose air you can't breathe, well, then I hope we are unprogressive, and I hope we never get to the point where that's our definition of progress."

This exchange exemplifies a dynamic we would observe over and over for more than two decades. For the first half of her political life, Hillary Clinton was consistently painted as so far left—so feminist—that it threatened her husband's political viability. Whenever that viability was in doubt, she would overcorrect, trying to convince a skeptical mainstream press that she wasn't nearly as liberal as she seemed. Eventually, the strategy of triangulation—using the left as a foil to prove her moderate bona fides—became nearly reflexive.

In recent years, however, America's political context has been transformed. With the white South becoming solidly Republican—something that happened during Bill Clinton's administration—the Democratic Party has become more reliant on the votes of women, people of color, and those who wear the "liberal" label proudly. This means that elections have become less about wooing swing voters than about turning out the base. Meanwhile, policies once supported by a smug centrist consensus—from Wall Street deregulation to military adventurism in the Middle East—have proved themselves failures, pushing the center of gravity in the Democratic Party to the left. Triangulation has become passé.

This means that, in a historical irony, Hillary Clinton now needs to convince progressives that she really is who she was once widely believed to be. She is running for president as a progressive feminist, something that would have been utterly quixotic when she entered public life. In a major address on the economy in July, Clinton emphasized the importance of women's equal-

“The political center of gravity is now a populist center of gravity.”

—Anna Galland,
executive director of
MoveOn.org Civic
Action

Michelle Goldberg is a senior contributing writer at The Nation and the author, most recently, of The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West.

ity in a way that no mainstream candidate has done before, describing equal pay, accessible childcare, and fair scheduling as key to economic growth. She's making paid leave a signature issue. "I am well aware that for far too long, these challenges have been dismissed by some as 'women's issues,'" she said. "Well, those days are over."

It was thrilling language. Yet after spending so many decades trying to shed her reputation for liberalism, Clinton has amassed a record that many on the left find troubling, if not unforgivable. The wildfire growth of Bernie Sanders's campaign suggests that a large part of the grassroots is dissatisfied with her. She will almost certainly be the Democratic nominee, but "the X factor is enthusiasm, which is going to be a real challenge," says Rashad Robinson, executive director of ColorOfChange, the online civil-rights organization. "The question will be, for all of us: How will Hillary speak to the issues of the left?"

Whatever Clinton says, some will remain unconvinced. But in attempting to court progressive voters, Clinton isn't adopting new positions; rather, she's coming full circle. "I think her progressive résumé and her progressive roots are very, very strong," says Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, a progressive stalwart who backed Barack Obama eight years ago but is now an enthusiastic Clinton supporter. "Not only has she decided to go back to her roots, but the time is different. This is a progressive moment, I believe." What remains to be seen is whether Clinton, after all the ideological maneuvering required to climb in US politics during a very different time, will be able to seize it.

HILLARY CLINTON WAS NEVER A radical, but her formative political years were spent on the left. She did her undergraduate thesis on organizer Saul Alinsky, to whom she once wrote (in a letter unearthed by the right-wing Washington Free Beacon), "The more I've seen of places like Yale Law School and the people who haunt them, the more convinced I am that we have the serious business and joy of much work ahead—if the commitment to a free and open society is ever going to mean more than eloquence

and frustration.” During law school, Clinton interned at Treuhaft, Walker & Burnstein, a radical law firm whose clients included the Black Panthers. In *A Woman in Charge*, Carl Bernstein’s 2007 biography of Clinton, he quotes Robert Treuhaft, the firm’s senior partner, as saying that Clinton was “in sympathy with all the left causes, and there was a sharp dividing line at the time. We still weren’t very far out of the McCarthy era.” After graduating, Clinton would eschew corporate law to work for Marian Wright Edelman’s Children’s Defense Fund, where she focused on the needs of migrant farmworkers.

Years later, when Clinton did enter corporate law, it was in order to provide her family with some economic stability amid the vicissitudes of her husband’s political career, which she saw as a vehicle for the sort of progressive change she longed for. Even then, she remained socially engaged: President Jimmy Carter appointed her to chair the Legal Services Corporation, the politically embattled organization providing free legal services to poor defendants. She was the first woman to hold the position.

WHEN HER HUSBAND became president, Hillary was solidly on the left of his administration’s ideological spectrum. During Bill Clinton’s first term, the White House was divided between those who wanted to prioritize healthcare reform, like Hillary, and deficit hawks like Robert Rubin, the former cochairman of Goldman Sachs, who cared most about balancing the budget. At one point, Bernstein describes her snapping at her husband: “You didn’t get elected to do Wall Street economics.”

When Clinton testified about healthcare before Congress in 1993, her disciplined passion mesmerized *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, who would later become one of her most merciless critics. “Her bravura in back-to-back appearances today before two House committees carried a sense of wonder,” Dowd wrote. But the first lady’s crusading spirit was far from universally appreciated in the early days of the Clinton administration. In her biography *Hillary’s Choice*, Gail Sheehy quotes an exchange between Dick Morris, the mercenary pollster who had worked with the Clintons in Arkansas, and Clinton strategist James Carville, about Hillary’s plans for healthcare:

Mystified, he went to James Carville: “What’s with all this liberalism?”

“These fuckin’ liberals are all over the place!” exploded Carville. “They are like water damage. They seep in.”

After the Clintons’ attempt at healthcare reform went down in flames, the economic centrists in the White House got the upper hand. Hillary was widely blamed for the catastrophic 1994 midterms, in which Republi-

Clinton pushed her husband to prioritize healthcare, testifying twice before Congress in support of reform.



It’s easy to forget now, but when Clinton ran for president in 2008, much of her platform was to Obama’s left.

cans, led by Newt Gingrich, won the House for the first time in 40 years. “My view is Hillary Clinton destroyed the Democratic Party,” Lawrence O’Donnell, the former aide to Senator Patrick Moynihan and current MSNBC host, told Bernstein. Personally shattered, Hillary threw herself into her husband’s strategy of triangulation, a word she uses approvingly in her own memoir, *Living History*. She even brought Morris into the White House, despite the fact that, during the midterms, he’d been working for Republicans. “Morris’s specialty,” Hillary wrote, “was identifying the swing voters who seesawed between the two parties.” The Clintons rededicated themselves to winning those voters over.

In his memoir, *In an Uncertain World*, Robert Rubin describes a conversation he had with Hillary and her ideological ally, Labor Secretary Robert Reich, after the midterm elections. According to Rubin, Reich believed that the Democratic base had been unmotivated and prescribed a more populist economic stance. Rubin, however, blanched at language like “corporate welfare,” arguing that it would “adversely affect business confidence” and be politically ineffective. Hillary, he wrote, agreed with him: “The polls and political intelligence we have say that the people we need to reach don’t respond well to that kind of populist approach,” she told Reich.

This was a typical pattern. Faced with a humiliating public rebuke for being too far to the left, she retreated to the safer center. “There’s this human quality of, when you are that buffeted and that challenged, you go back to the more conservative stuff,” says a former Clinton White House staffer. “What has been instrumental for her as a political

person was also a survival mechanism for her as a human being. She had her identity publicly dismantled twice”—first during the 1992 campaign, and then during the Monica Lewinsky scandal. “She invests very heavily in American progressivism as a younger woman,” the staffer adds, “and it sort of hangs her out to dry.”

This doesn’t mean that Clinton abandoned progressivism entirely. According to Melanne Verveer, her former chief of staff, after healthcare reform failed, Hillary pleaded with her husband to expand the coverage for children, which he did through the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, passed in 1997. And Hillary remained particularly strong on women’s issues. In 1995, as the head of the American delegation to the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women, held that year in Beijing, Clinton gave a speech that is widely seen as a watershed moment in the history of the global women’s-rights movement. “Twenty years later, you can see it really did begin this massive shift on how we look at gender and development,” says Heather Hurlburt, a former White House and State Department speechwriter who served as a consultant to Clinton when she was a US senator. “You have a dramatic change in the degree to which development is focused on women and women’s health and reproduction.”

Domestically, however, Clinton stopped sticking her neck out. Though uneasy about welfare reform, she didn't oppose her husband signing it; according to Bernstein, "She accepted the decision as inevitable." Nor did she try to distance herself from it later: In her Senate run in 2000, she made her support for the death penalty, welfare restrictions, and a balanced budget clear.

Yet once Clinton became a senator and had the opportunity to carve out her own political identity, she moved left once again. According to the vote-ranking system DW-Nominate, which is used by political scientists, Clinton is one of the most liberal senators when all her votes are tabulated, consistently to the left of Barack Obama, Joe Biden, and John Kerry. She voted against the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which her husband publicly supported, as well as Bush's energy bill, which included \$14.5 billion in tax breaks for the energy industry, and which Obama voted for. She attempted to establish a 9/11-style commission to investigate the federal response to Hurricane Katrina.

"I think she had a great record in the Senate," says Larry Cohen, the recently retired president of the Communications Workers of America, who is volunteering for the Sanders campaign. According to Wade Rathke, founder of ACORN, the now-defunct community-organizing association, when Clinton was senator, "we couldn't have asked for a better friend on any issue we had that involved ACORN in New York." She advocated for the group's housing programs and defended the Community Reinvestment Act, a 1977 law encouraging banks to make loans to people in low-income neighborhoods, when it was under fire by Republicans.

For most of the left, however, Clinton's generally progressive Senate record was eclipsed by her vote authorizing the war in Iraq, her biggest overcorrection of all. Her observers are still debating whether the vote was one of misguided principle or political expedience. Most likely, it was both: Clinton is more hawkish than other Democrats, but also often responsive to political pressure. "I do believe there's a good bit of ideology" behind the vote, says Rashid Khalidi, a professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Columbia University and the author, most recently, of *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*. "On the other hand, she's mainly a political operative; she will go with the wind, within the limits of her party."

IT'S EASY TO FORGET NOW, BUT when Hillary first ran for president, much of her platform was to Obama's left, particularly on domestic economic issues. She called for a cabinet-level position "solely and fully devoted to ending poverty as we know it, that will focus the attention of our nation on this issue and never let it go." Her healthcare plan was more far-reaching than the one

“The X factor is enthusiasm, which is going to be a real challenge.”

—Rashad Robinson,
executive director of
ColorOfChange

During her Senate campaign in 1999, Clinton reiterated her support for welfare restrictions and the death penalty.

Obama initially proposed. "We did a speech in Iowa in November of 2007 calling for regulation of derivatives," says Neera Tanden, who worked on Hillary's presidential campaign and now heads the Center for American Progress. "No one was talking about those issues."

Yet the Iraq debacle haunted her—and though voting for it had been a disastrous mistake, it didn't convince Hillary to stop triangulating in an effort to appear tough. Faced with Obama's insurgent candidacy, Clinton resorted to Dick Morris-style tactics, painting her challenger as weak and radical and seeking to remake herself as the champion of the very sort of blue-collar white men who reviled her during her husband's presidency. A particular low point was an interview she gave to *USA Today*, in which she said that "Senator Obama's support among working, hardworking Americans, white Americans, is weakening again."

This is the Hillary Clinton that many of today's young activists remember. "We can't pretend like that didn't happen," says ColorOfChange's Rashad Robinson. Although she healed some of the wounds of that campaign when she became Obama's secretary of state, he adds, "I don't think it's about the hard feelings—I think it's about how much people sign up on the Love Train."

Of course, during her tenure as head of the State Department, Clinton alienated the left in other ways. She was a major supporter of American intervention in Libya, and, if she'd had her way, the United States would have gotten more involved in the war in Syria. She also supported an escalation of the war in Afghanistan. "Hillary Clinton has many virtues," says Juan Cole, a professor of Middle Eastern history at the University of Michigan. "I think she would stand up in important ways for labor; I think she'd be good on many domestic issues that progressives care about. But on foreign policy, she has been a hawk, and in that regard more hawkish than President Obama, whose hawkishness has disappointed a lot of progressives."

Yet her hawkishness isn't the whole story. As secretary of state, Clinton also brought the awareness of global



women's issues that she'd developed as first lady. At the United Nations, she led the push for Security Council Resolution 1888, which requires the UN to take steps to protect women and children from wartime sexual violence. She made sure that women's concerns were represented in forums where they had traditionally been absent. Verveer, who served as the US ambassador for global women's issues under Clinton, describes how she put women's economic participation on the agenda at the 21-nation Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. "There are aspects of her foreign-policy record that are profoundly progressive, and she's done things that nobody else could do," Hurlburt adds. "I think people miss that."

Further, Clinton has defended President Obama's nuclear deal with Iran, the most significant foreign-policy issue of the day, despite the misgivings of some of her pro-Israel donors, particularly billionaire Haim Saban. "You have to give her credit," says Khalidi. "Saban is one of the biggest funders of the campaign against the Iran deal, and she has taken a clear position on that."

Indeed, most of the positions she's taken in her current run should please progressives: Clinton has generally been more liberal than either she or Obama was in 2008. After her searing loss eight years ago, she appears to be fully cognizant of the way that American politics have changed since the 1990s. "The path to winning requires the Democratic presidential candidates to understand that the center of power in this country is no longer Third Way corporate 'centrism,'" says Anna Galland, executive director of MoveOn.org Civic Action, one wing of the progressive organizing behemoth originally founded to oppose Bill Clinton's impeachment. "The political center of gravity is now a populist center of gravity, and everyone needs to reckon with that. I think her campaign is savvy, and they will."

NOT EVERYONE BUYS CLINTON'S BORN-AGAIN progressivism. Bill McKibben, the founder of the activist environmental group 350.org, is scathing about her record on the environment at the State Department. "She mishandled, at best, Keystone, which became the greatest environmental cause of recent decades in the United

In many ways, the debate over Clinton is a debate over when pragmatism becomes complacency.

At her campaign launch in 2015, Clinton called for paid family leave, saying: "This isn't a women's issue. It's a family issue."

States," he says. Clinton once said she was "inclined" to approve the pipeline, and as a presidential candidate has refused to take a position on it. As secretary of state, McKibben points out, she attempted to promote fracking overseas, and the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference "completely collapsed" on her watch and never reached binding targets on emissions reductions.

Now, McKibben continues, nearly all of the lobbyists bundling donations for Clinton have ties to the fossil-fuel industry. "If you're going to deal with climate change, there's no way to avoid squaring off with the fossil-fuel industry at some point," he says. "It's not one of these things where you can have everybody happy with you in the end, because we're going to have to strand huge quantities of carbon, gas, and oil under the ground. The [Republicans] know this, which is why the Koch brothers are willing to invest immense amounts of money in the campaign."

Still, in one of Clinton's first public appearances in this campaign, she called for getting the money out of politics—"once and for all, even if it takes a constitutional amendment"—and she has pledged to appoint Supreme Court justices who will overturn *Citizens United*. Until that happens, Clinton defenders argue, it's impossible to run a viable political campaign without cultivating powerful allies and raising a lot of money. Already, Clinton is far behind the GOP in that regard: The largest Super PAC backing Clinton, Priorities USA Action, has raised \$15.7 million, while Jeb Bush's Super PAC has drummed up \$103 million; Scott Walker's has raised \$20 million. Even, the AP pointed out, Rick Perry, who didn't qualify for the first Republican debate, has raised more in Super PAC funds than Clinton. "There is no hypocrisy in saying you can run a campaign according to the rules of the road while also saying that you want to change the system," says Lawrence Lessig, a Harvard professor who has launched a number of campaign-finance reform efforts, addressing Clinton's fundraising.

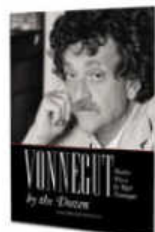
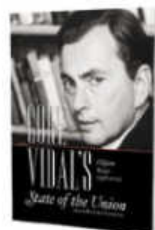
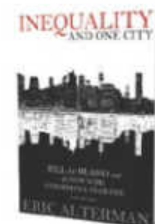
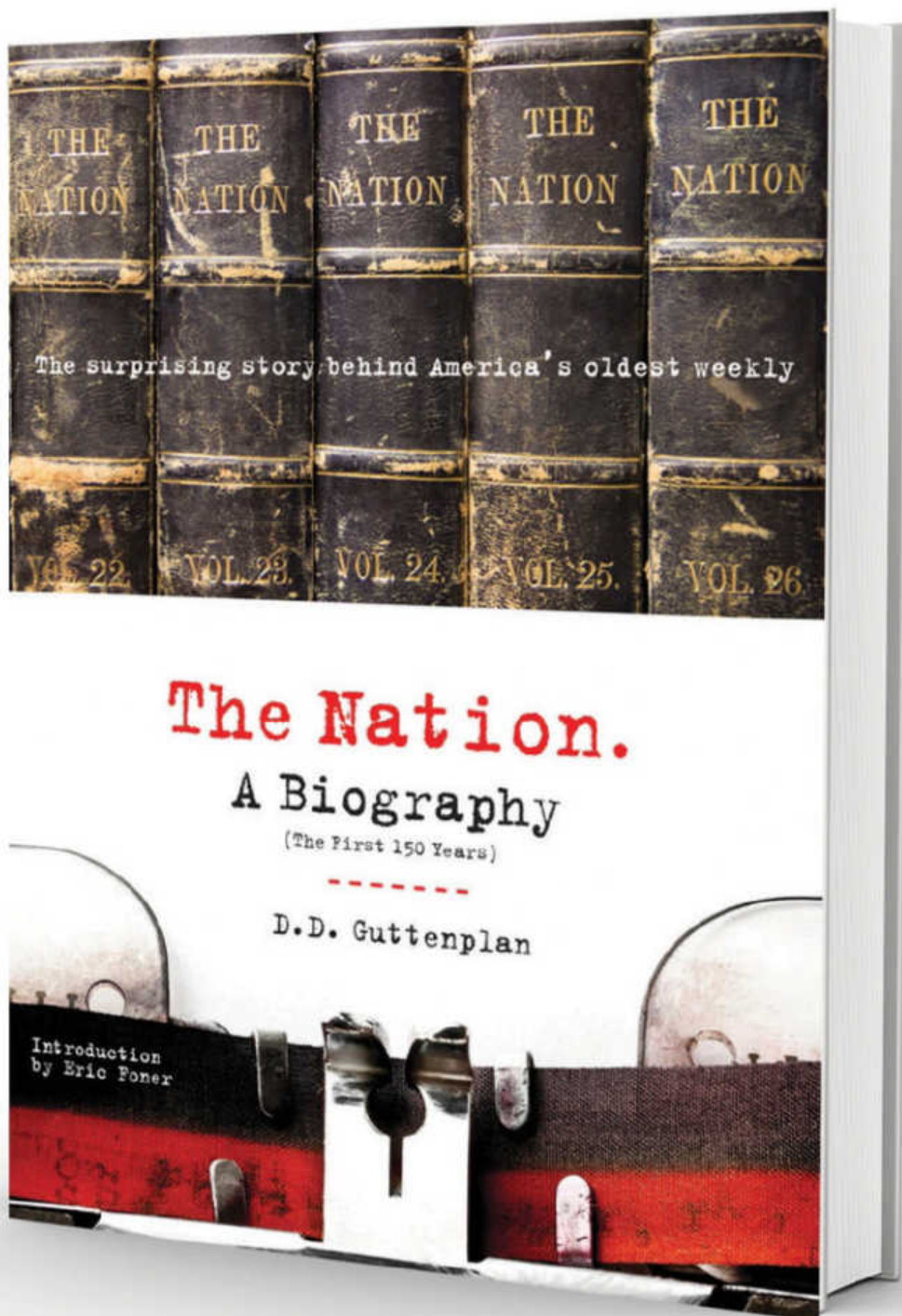
Is Hillary Clinton uniquely or even particularly objectionable, then, for taking Wall Street and K Street money? After all, the single most common adjective that people attach to her is "pragmatic." For example, Ellen Chesler, a longtime friend of both Clintons and director of the Women and Girls Rising Initiative at the Roosevelt Institute, describes her as "a genuine progressive, in terms of her thinking, who is also pragmatic, in terms of understanding the exigencies or requirements of moving forward in a two-party system or a federal government."

IN MANY WAYS, THE PROGRESSIVE DEBATE OVER Hillary Clinton is all about the limits of pragmatism: How much compromise can be excused by good intentions? When does realism become a complacent acceptance of the status quo? Cohen, for his part, refuses to call Clinton "pragmatic." He prefers the word "practical," arguing: "Pragmatic people believe in problem solving. Practical people often tell us why we can't solve problems that we care deeply about."

It is easy to overstate how widespread this sort of disillusionment with Clinton is. A recent survey by Public Policy Polling found that while 69 percent of Democrats



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view her favorably, 82 percent of those who describe themselves as “very liberal” do. But there is a fear, among many activists, that Clinton’s long history of cautious positioning has made it hard for the base to muster much enthusiasm. “This is going to be a stretch for a lot of people—to believe that this is where they should put their \$20, that they should go down and volunteer and make phone calls,” Rathke observes. “There’s no heart beating; there’s no excitement.”

Saru Jayaraman, cofounder of the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, a group seeking fair wages for restaurant workers, suggests that the lack of passion stems from a broader disenchantment with electoral politics, at least among the people she represents. “The real energy in my community isn’t actually around presidential elections at all,” she says. “It’s not around voting at all. Right now, it really feels like a moment of social upheaval. People are feeling like their form of democratic representation is taking to the street, taking action. Honestly, it’s not like my people are any more excited about Bernie Sanders.”

Jayaraman’s constituency is mostly female, and if they’re as disengaged as she says, it’s bad news for the Clinton campaign, which will need working-class women and women of color to turn out en masse. (A recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll showed that while 66 percent of black Americans have a positive view of Clinton, only 34 percent of white women do.) Yet Jayaraman is more sanguine about the Clinton campaign than Cohen is—and that’s largely because there’s one very big way in which a Clinton presidency would not be business as usual at all. It matters, Jayaraman says, that Clinton is a woman. It’s led her to pay attention to working-class issues that others miss, such as the plight of tipped workers, two-thirds of whom are women. “Every time the minimum wage has gone up in 43 states across the country, tipped workers have pretty much entirely been left out and stuck at \$2 wages,” Jayaraman says. “Which means minimum-wage advocates themselves—people on the left—have left out half of the women in the minimum-wage population every time the minimum wage has gone up.”

At least in her rhetoric, Clinton isn’t leaving these women out. “The fact that she’s a woman, the fact that gender equality and income inequality are going to be two of the key issues of this campaign—[wages for tipped workers] really fits in the nexus of those two issues,” Jayaraman says.

Sixteen years ago, the late Barbara Olson, who served as chief investigative counsel to one of the House committees that investigated the Clintons in the 1990s, wrote *Hell to Pay: The Unfolding Story of Hillary Rodham Clinton*. In it, Olson warned: “Hillary is a woman animated by a lifelong ambition. That ambition is to make the world accept the ideas she embraced in the sanctuaries of liberation theology, radical feminism, and the hard left.” These were the words of a paranoid fanatic. Yet if, after all these years, Clinton were elected on a pro-childcare, pro-healthcare, pro-family-leave platform, it would represent a profound historical victory over the right-wing reaction that has dogged her for most of her life. Whether that’s enough of a victory to excite today’s ascendant left remains to be seen. ■

Sasha Abramsky, a regular contributor to The Nation, is the author of several books, including Breadline USA and The American Way of Poverty. This piece is adapted from The House of Twenty Thousand Books, published in the United States in September by New York Review Books.

The Wise Man of Hillway

Chimen Abramsky loved books so much that he filled his home with as many as 20,000 of them—including some of the world’s greatest socialist and Jewish texts.

by SASHA ABRAMSKY

HERE IS NO SOUND ON EARTH LIKE THAT OF a quiet man, a dignified man, exploding in primal grief. Nothing compares to it—not fingernails scraping on a blackboard, not the whir of a dental drill through enamel.

Nothing. It is the howl of absolute horror, a keening black hole of noise that sucks in everything else. It pulls you into the abyss—extraordinary, out of character, it brooks no dissent. This, the sound announces, is about forever.

I heard this noise as I cradled the phone to my left ear in March 2010. I was at home in Sacramento, California, perched desolate on a sofa in the TV room, my wife and children in another room. Six thousand miles away, my father was sitting next to his father’s body at my grandfather’s north London home at 5 Hillway, in Highgate. A few minutes earlier, Chimen Abramsky had finally died. Of what? Old age? He was 93 years old. Complications from Parkinson’s disease? He had been deteriorating for years, a frail, deaf old man, a widower increasingly locked, stony-faced, into a broken, frozen body. Or the aftermath of a horrifying series of late-life illnesses and infections, each of which in and of itself ought to have killed him? In the end, the cause didn’t really matter. What mattered was that the last of my grandparents had died. The man who had surrounded himself with tens of thousands of wondrously rare books, bought over the better part of a century, had disappeared—everything that made him *him* replaced with the waxen, impersonal stillness of death.

As I started to weep, part of me floated up above the scene and, looking down, wondered why I was so shocked. After all, I had had plenty of time to practice my grief: Chimen’s decline had been slow, his final months painful and humiliating, every phone call to my



Four generations:
The author as a child
with (from left to
right) his father Jack,
grandfather Chimen,
and great-grandfather
Yehezkel Abramsky.



parents or siblings begun with an update on his tenuous hold on life. He had become, during those last few years, a coda to his own story.

IN THE 17TH CENTURY, RENÉ DESCARTES HAD FAMOUSLY CONCLUDED, “I think, therefore I am.” For much of Chimen’s life, as he methodically constructed his House of Books, the reverse held true: He was, and therefore he thought—had he not thought, read, analyzed the world around him, and the history whence that world grew, he would have been a lost soul. He was, after all, never very good at twiddling his thumbs. But in his 90s, sick, deaf, and unable to leave his house to go on walks, he became a prisoner; his mind was locked in his failing body, and that body was cloistered away in his House of Books. Bit by bit, the world closed in on him. The house that had once served as one of left-wing London’s great salons, and which still contained one of England’s most important private libraries, now became utterly claustrophobic. The home that had sparkled with intellectual life when I visited it as a child became a little frightening, decrepit, a place I took my own children to out of obligation rather than joy. Animated conversation was replaced by the long silences of deaf old age; the bustle of a crowded kitchen and a gaggle of diners and overnight guests gave away to the stillness of Parkinson’s.

Then the Cartesian equation righted itself: Seeking to maintain a hold on life, on sanity, Chimen became even more obsessed with the world of books he had created for himself. Like a man who pinches himself to make sure he still has feeling, Chimen read to reassure himself that he was still alive. He thought, therefore he was. For years, as he declined, his ability to think sustained him; he clung to his extraordinary intellectual facilities, to his near-photographic powers of recall.

The atheist third son of a famous rabbi, Yehezkel Abramsky, who in 1956 had won the first Israel Prize for rabbinic literature; the grandson of another famous rabbi, Moshe Nahum Jerusalemky; and the great-grandson of yet a third renowned rabbi, Yaakov David Willowski, Chimen was like a character out of an Isaac Bashevis Singer story, or an antiquarian out of a Dickens novel, or an eccentric 18th-century salon host—or, more accurately, a chimera of them all. It was impossible to pigeon-hole him; too many stories flowed through his person simultaneously.

While his father was head of London’s Beth Din, the chief religious court for Jews in Britain, Chimen was a leading member of the Communist Party of Great Britain and ran, with my grandmother Miriam (known to us grandchildren as “Mimi”), a Jewish bookstore and publishing house named Shapiro, Valentine & Co., around the corner from Yehezkel’s office. Later on, he became an outspoken critic of the Soviet Union and came to count the liberal philosopher Isaiah Berlin among his closest friends and champions. Lacking a university degree, Chimen nevertheless, in middle age, was acknowledged as one of the world’s great experts in both socialist history and Jewish history. After decades buying and selling books for a living, he spent the latter part of his career as an academic, first lecturing on Marxism at St. Antony’s College, Oxford, and then as chair of the Hebrew and Jewish Studies Department at University College London. (He also spent time as a visiting professor at Brandeis and Stanford.) Rounding out his career, Chimen became a leading consultant on manuscripts for Sotheby’s auction house.

Chimen was like a character out of an Isaac Bashevis Singer story, or an antiquarian out of a Dickens novel.



He was, across all these incarnations, one of England’s most extraordinary book collectors and one of the great letter writers of his age, penning missives in English, Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish, sometimes as many as 10 or even 20 in a day, to a vast array of acquaintances. Over the decades, Chimen had become so addicted to the printed page, to the texture of books, to the feel of old manuscripts, and to the material contained in his written correspondence that he ended up surrounding himself with walls of words. They provided protection from the madness of the world outside—or, at the very least, a road map for navigating the chaos.

By the end of his life, every single room in the house, except the bathroom and kitchen, was lined from floor to ceiling with shelves double-stacked with books, with only a few bare spots left in which paintings and photographs hung. If you pulled a few bricks out of the wall of books, you found a second, hidden wall behind it. And when the shelves were filled, first the floors and then the tables succumbed to great, twisting piles of tomes. In a home that remained largely unrenovated during the 66 years Chimen inhabited it, becoming more dilapidated with each passing year, ideas were the mortar holding his bibliobricks together: notions of progress, theories of history, understandings of civility and culture, explanations of how and why great cultures and civilizations decline.

Hillway, as we called the house where he and Miriam lived, held two libraries. The first was Chimen’s socialist collection, the second his Judaica volumes. The Judaica collection, even after 5,000 books and 2,000 offprints had been removed in the 1980s to join other volumes in a specially endowed section of the library at University College London, was utterly comprehensive, detailing every conceivable aspect of Jewish life over the centuries. Of the 7,000 items purchased by the university, Chimen’s colleague Mark Geller, in internal correspondence with the university’s provost, wrote that they made up “probably the best Jewish History library in Europe.” The socialist collection was in all likelihood the most complete privately owned collection of 18th-, 19th-, and early-20th-century socialist literature anywhere in the world. Certainly, it was the most complete collection of its kind in Britain.

I do not think anyone ever counted the number of books in the house, although Chimen had made partial efforts over the years to catalog his collection, and various book experts spent weeks studying it after he died. Looking at the shelves, I estimated that there were probably close to 20,000 volumes in the house at the time of Chimen’s death. My father believed it was more like 15,000.

Whatever the exact number of books at Hillway, it was staggering—and what made it even more so was their quality. Chimen did not simply aim for numbers; he collected books and editions that were extraordinarily hard to find. They were the stuff of rebirth, ways to bring vanished pasts to life, preserving the memories and ideas of men and women now long dead, their worlds as vanished as their voices, their smiles, their bodies. Inside Hillway, one could embark on journeys into that past, to see the fighters of 1848 take to the streets in Vienna or Berlin or London itself; to witness the Paris Com-

munards on the barricades; to visit the Russian revolutionaries in Petrograd in October 1917, or the displaced Yiddish-language journalists and theater impresarios who, a century earlier, had printed East End newspapers with such whimsical names as *Der Poylisher Yidl* and entertained homesick immigrants.

MY EARLIEST MEMORY OF HILLWAY IS NOT one of entry, of coming up the garden path and through the red front door, but rather of the citadel: Chimen and Miriam's bedroom.

I was 3 years old, old enough to be taken to a party at University College London, where Chimen was then chair of the Hebrew and Jewish Studies Department. After that party, Chimen brought me back to Hillway, where Mimi cooked us dinner. At some point that evening, thick fog rolled in and brought traffic to a standstill. Chimen tried to get me home to my parents' house, 12 miles away in West London, and failed. He was an appalling driver at the best of times, and the fog simply overwhelmed him. He turned around and, at a snail's pace, brought me back to Hillway. I screamed bloody murder that night. Lying between Mimi and Chimen in their musty old bedroom, surrounded by so many books they were impossible to count, I sobbed for hours.

Books cast strange shadows in a bedroom. Crammed next to one another, the varied colors and textures of the spines reflect and absorb light in different ways. Chimen and Mimi's bedroom had one little window, grimy with soot. If you pushed it hard, it opened outward, onto a view of the back garden and, behind that, the tall spire of a church. To the right of the window were piles of books and papers and a series of metal filing cabinets. To the left was a tiny wardrobe where Chimen's clothes hung, as well as a small chest of drawers for my grandparents' underwear and shirts. Next to that, along the wall facing the bed, was a huge old wooden rolltop desk, every inch covered with ancient books, handwritten correspondence, and a vast array of crumbling, antiquated documents. Above the desk were wooden bookshelves bracketed into the wall and sagging with the weight of photograph albums, books dating back to the 18th century, and old newspapers.

Upon those shelves, and in waterproof plastic bags atop more shelves in the upstairs hallway, was a collection of William Morris books and manuscripts, including the original woodcut for Morris's *News From Nowhere*, and a complete set of *Commonweal* newspapers that Morris had both published and, in this case, owned. It was, Chimen asserted proudly and perhaps a touch bombastically, more important than the Morris collection owned by the British Library.

On the other side of the desk was the bedroom door. Down the far wall were more bookshelves, these books inside sturdy cabinets with glass doors. Behind the doors, which were not in my memory locked, were hundreds of the rarest socialist books and manuscripts in the world: books with Marx's handwritten notes; volumes annotated by Lenin; treatises by Trotsky and by Rosa Luxemburg (including the typed manuscript of her doctoral thesis); original documents from the revolutionary



Behind the doors, which were not in my memory locked, were hundreds of the rarest socialist books and manuscripts in the world.

Chartist movement of the 1830s and '40s.

Chimen's greatest intellectual joy was his ability to find and purchase rare books. Part of that joy lay in what he knew he would find between the covers; he had the passions of a true historian, and he was a connoisseur of little details. When he read a book, he read it not simply for the main text, but for the footnotes, the name of the publisher, and the location of the printer. All were clues; all helped him to understand the milieu in which the book was crafted. The differences between editions gave him a glimpse of the author's evolving thoughts on a topic. The bibliographies enabled him to chart an intellectual odyssey.

But another part of the joy lay simply in the hunt. Chimen approached books with the tenderness of an artisan, cognizant of every little detail, every flaw, every unique blemish. "You can recognise the edition by the little woodcut on page 31 and also on the title page," he wrote to his friend and fellow rare-books collector, the economist Piero Sraffa, on November 23, 1959, of a particularly rare 1888 edition of *The Communist Manifesto*. "In some copies there is also a misprint; after Fleet a comma follows and then the word St. There are many reprints but they have slightly different woodcuts. I could easily recognise it if I could see it." To a layperson, the misprint would have been unnoticeable; to Chimen, it was as important as a misprinted old stamp might be to a philatelist.

Almost as important as the words were the ways the books felt and smelled. In turning the thick pages of old books or the crumbling, flaky pages of other volumes, one could imagine what Marx might have felt as he held a particular tome in his hands while researching his great tracts in the Reading Room of the British Museum. In the cloying smells released when ancient volumes were opened up, one could sniff out hints of lost printing techniques and papermaking methods, of inks manufactured centuries ago.

For an adult, to be invited into Chimen's bedroom signified not romantic interest or coy flirtation, but academic trust. You had to earn your way in, show knowledge of, or love for, socialism and its lost worlds—or, at the very least, the esoteric universe of rare manuscript and book collecting. You had to appreciate the sensation of touching a book that Marx had once owned and commented on; or a document on which Lenin had scribbled marginal notes; or a book that Trotsky had carried with him into exile. You had to have the capacity to comprehend the absurdly low probability of Marx's membership

card for the First International not only surviving more than 100 years but finding its way to Hillway. Or of scrip printed by the 19th-century utopian socialist Robert Owen ending up in this room.

There was, recalled one friend, "a touch of the impresario" about Chimen, "a magician's delight in surprising you. He'd trot off to a room and return with something and enjoy your reaction." A cousin recalled being shown the room in 1978, about 20 years after he had first visited the house, and Chimen wistfully asking him where he thought these books would be in 100 years. "He wasn't so much talking about where the books would be physically. He was talking about where the ideas would be."

But the grandchildren didn't have to earn an entrée to this citadel. It was simply where we slept at Hillway when we were too young and too scared to sleep alone. It smelled old and musty, and I was never quite sure whether that was the smell of the books or of my grandparents. ■

Britain's Icon of Authenticity

by D.D. GUTTENPLAN

London

STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE: A grizzled left-winger with a bold anti-austerity message begins what everyone assumes is a quixotic quest for elected office. His campaign provokes an unexpected wave of public enthusiasm, drawing cheering crowds that embarrass his rivals, and inspiring hordes of previously disaffected young people. Yet the media continue to insist that as an unabashed socialist with no national executive experience, he remains unelectable, while senior figures in his party warn of dire consequences if voters refuse to grow up and settle for a politician whose coronation has begun to seem less inevitable with every passing day.

For an American, especially, it is impossible to witness the growing excitement here over Jeremy Corbyn's candidacy for the leadership of the Labour Party without being reminded of Bernieman. Though Corbyn, at 66, is more youthful than the 73-year-old Vermont senator, and entered Parliament as MP for Islington, in north London, back when Sanders was still in his first term as mayor of Burlington, the two mavericks share a reputation for putting principle ahead of popularity, a willingness to challenge their own party's conventional wisdom—especially on the economy—and an improbable status as icons of authenticity in an age of sound-bite politics.

But if you want to understand the roots of Corbyn's appeal, and the painful dilemma he poses for the British left, you need to look past the gadfly-turned-Galahad story to the blasted landscape of the Labour Party, still reeling from its stunning defeat last May. With the next elections not due until 2020, Ed Miliband's speedy resignation allowed the Conservatives, now in possession of a parliamentary majority, to throw off whatever concessions they'd had to make to their former coalition partners, the Liberal Democrats—cutting £12 billion from welfare, withdrawing housing benefits from 18-to-21-year-olds, and limiting low-income tax credits to just two children per family. As if to underline Labour's moral and intellectual bankruptcy, when the changes came to a vote in July, Harriet Harman, the party's acting leader, forbade her colleagues from voting against the government.

Andy Burnham, a working-class Catholic with matinee-idol looks who led in all the early polls (and who was widely described as the candidate of the unions and the left), abstained. So did Yvette Cooper, who like Burnham had been a minister in both Tony Blair's and Gordon

EUROPE'S NEW LEFT HOPE

Jeremy Corbyn's surge in the battle for Britain's Labour leadership echoes a continent-wide revolt against austerity.




Brown's governments, and Liz Kendall, who though elected to Parliament in 2010 has become the Blairite champion in the race. The only leadership contender to actually vote against the latest Tory attack on Britain's poorest was Jeremy Corbyn, whose dark-horse candidacy was initially viewed as mere window dressing, a gesture to placate the party's fractious but impotent left wing. Indeed, Corbyn—who, in his previous 30 years as a serial rebel on Labour's back benches, had never betrayed any hint of leadership ambition—scraped together the 35 nominations from sitting MPs required to get on the ballot only thanks to the support of several who publicly declared they'd be voting for one of his opponents.

The plan was to provide Burnham—or Cooper—a “hard left” foil during the summer debates, and maybe add a little spice to a field described by one senior Labour MP as “like Ed Miliband without the charisma.” Unlike Sanders, who though elected as an independent has always caucused with Senate Democrats, Corbyn, titular head of the Stop the War Coalition, has never seemed comfortable inside any political party—not the various Trotskyist groupuscules whose causes he has supported and defended, without (so far as I can tell) ever joining any of them, nor the Labour Party itself, whose patronage and preferments he has refused. (During the 2009 scandal over MPs' expenses, Corbyn was revealed to have claimed just £8.70 for an ink cartridge—less than any of his colleagues.) Yet from the very first televised debate on June 17, the odds on Corbyn, originally 100 to 1, began to shorten as audiences responded to his firm rejection of both Tory plans for another three years of austerity and the variations on austerity-lite offered by his Labour opponents. By the middle of August, Corbyn was so far ahead that one firm of British bookies had already begun to pay out on bets backing him to win.


IF ELECTED, CORBYN HAS PROMISED TO END TUITION fees at British universities, remove restrictions on borrowing so that local councils can build more public housing, introduce rent controls on private housing, and offer private tenants a “right to buy” from large landlords similar to the scheme Margaret Thatcher used to sell off public housing. Unlike Cooper and Burnham, Corbyn voted against the Iraq War; he also voted against authorizing air strikes in Syria, and has pledged not to replace Britain's aging Trident nuclear-weapons system. A former left Euroskeptic like his friend and mentor Tony Benn, Corbyn now says he'd prefer for Britain to remain in the EU but argues that Labour needs to make sure Cameron doesn't trade away workers' rights and environmental protections when he renegotiates British membership.

Alone among the candidates, Corbyn favors taking Britain's railways and energy companies back into public ownership—two “radical” proposals that have long been backed not only by Labour Party members, but by a majority of Conservative voters as well! And while Burnham began his campaign by conceding that Labour had lost the argument on the economy—“We have to start by admitting that we should not have been running a significant deficit in the years before the crash,” he said—and Cooper stressed the need “to reset Labour's relationship with business,” Corbyn was defiantly not on the same page. Instead, he has proposed a “People's Quantitative Easing,” in which the central bank would electronically expand the money supply—but rather than use the newly created funds to buy Treasury notes (as in the original American QE) or bank or insurance-company debt (as in the British version), the proceeds would be used to build public housing




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and other infrastructure projects. Although using public funds for the common good might pass for radical in some circles, and Corbyn had a kind word for Karl Marx as recently as last month, the underlying ideas here owe more to J.M. Keynes than to anyone else.

Which hasn't stopped Tony Blair from accusing Corbyn's supporters of "walking eyes shut...over the cliff's edge." Or Alastair Campbell, the flack whose fingerprints were all over the "dodgy dossier" justifying the invasion of Iraq, from urging fellow Labour Party members to vote for "anyone but Corbyn." Even former Labour prime minister Gordon Brown issued a typically dour—and typically oblique—warning against becoming a "party of permanent protest" rather than a contender for power. For a man whose detractors accuse him of splitting the party, Corbyn has already healed Labour's great rift. He was even the subject of an approving tweet by Rupert Murdoch, who called Corbyn the "only candidate who believes anything, right or wrong."

SO WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE? BETWEEN NOW AND September 10, the last day for postal ballots, attacks against Corbyn are likely to increase in frequency and fury. The most easily dismissed is "entryism." It's true that under the new rules instituted by Ed Miliband, Labour "supporters" can register to vote for as little as £3 (about \$5), and that, partly inspired by Corbyn's candidacy, hundreds of thousands of supporters have signed up. In response, the party has instituted a series of checks to exclude anyone who has been a candidate or activist for another party. But as a Labour grandee told me, "There just aren't that many Trotskyists."

The tiny handful of Corbyn's backers from Socialist Action are outnumbered at least 100 to 1 by supporters from Unite (the country's largest trade union), Unison (the second-largest), and a host of other unions representing everything from civil servants to firefighters to workers on the London Underground. And these, in turn, are dwarfed by the tidal wave of students, retirees attracted by Corbyn's pledge to make adult nursing care part of the National Health Service, and ordinary voters delighted at the chance to vote for a candidate who understands that austerity isn't working.

Then there are—predictably, given Corbyn's long record of support for the Palestinian cause—the accusations of anti-Semitism. Not against Corbyn himself, who is universally regarded as a thoroughly decent man. Instead the attacks are classic "guilt by association" tactics, in which Corbyn is alleged to have shared a platform with various objectionable characters whom he has then been pressed to denounce or disavow—by groups and individuals who have been happily doing Benjamin Netanyahu's dirty work for years.

And, of course, there is the question of "electability." As Bernie Sanders has shown, electability is a moving target: get enough votes to win the nomination, and you're electable. Besides, anyone arguing that the trio of lackluster apparatchiks who have been rapidly outshone by Corbyn would be more "electable" if they were only facing a Tory opponent (overwhelmingly backed by the British

media) instead of a rumpled, bearded, teetotal Marxist vegetarian obviously has an idiosyncratic understanding of the word.

Which doesn't mean there is nothing to worry about. Corbyn arrived in Westminster in 1983, the year the party's manifesto was dubbed "the longest suicide note in history." Yet just last year, in a column for the *Morning Star* (formerly the newspaper of the British Communist Party), Corbyn wrote that the 1983 Labour manifesto "would be highly appropriate today to deal with the finance and banking crisis." His detractors cite this as proof that Corbyn is yesterday's man, looking backward rather than forward. They may have a point.

There is certainly something decidedly, even perversely, retro about his promise to reopen Britain's coal mines. "We shouldn't be talking about coal. We should be talking about decarbonizing the economy," a Labour activist friend said. Even Corbyn's call for Britain to leave NATO sounds less like bold new politics than a tired relic of 1980s anti-American groupthink. Disband NATO? Maybe. But leave? For what? If Corbyn has a vision of a new, less militarized Europe, he's kept it under wraps.

Finally, there is the small matter of effective opposition. Opposing the government will be the new Labour leader's primary task for the next several years. How will Corbyn, a man who has never even given lip service to party discipline, persuade his colleagues to unite behind him? Of the few sane reasons to oppose Corbyn, his manifest unsuitability to lead a parliamentary opposition is probably the most persuasive.

Politics, however, is a long game. With five years until the next election, any hope of stopping the Tories will rely more on marches, demonstrations, and direct action than on votes in Westminster. Whoever wins in September might well be gone in a year or two. Meanwhile, the Labour Party is finally having the argument that Ed Miliband put off: about whom it claims to represent, and what kind of country it wants to build. And thanks to Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters, that argument has taken a surprising—and surprisingly radical—turn.

The Price, and Promise, of Solidarity

by MARIA MARGARONIS

THEY EMERGE ONE AFTER THE OTHER—THE anti-austerity parties, the purveyors of hope, the new or newly popular leaders and formations—from Greece to Spain to Ireland, from Turkey to Israel, from Burlington to Britain. They rally thousands, speak out for the dispossessed, challenge moribund elites; they are vilified as populist, deluded, dangerous; they win elections (Greece's Syriza, Barcelona's Mayor Ada Colau) or cross parliamentary thresholds (Israel's Arab Joint List or Turkey's HDP). They are in a sense successors to mass movements (Occupy, the *indignados*, Gezi Park, the Arab Spring). They glow for a short time on the bleak world stage; they are blocked, or fail, or fade, and new ones take their place.

Jeremy Corbyn puts his bid for the Labour Party leadership in that company. "There is some kind of global movement going on," he said last week in Middlesbrough, "and I think it's something the Labour Party should be able to understand and embrace." But what kind of movement is it? How much do these different forces have in

*D.D. Guttenplan
and Maria
Margaronis
write from
The Nation's
London bureau.*

common? In a globalized economy where capital moves freely, what does it mean to act locally? What would it take—what would it even look like—for all these small-d democrats, proponents of human rights and human dignity, actually to work together?

These are all big questions, to which I have no answers. But there may be some lessons to draw from the Greek conundrum (not a Robert Ludlum novel), adduced by both proponents and opponents of austerity. Britain, of course, is not Greece, however much Tory austerians threaten us with its fate should we refuse to worry about the deficit. To state the obvious, Britain has its own currency and untold wealth sloshing about in its business and financial sectors; its GDP is the fifth-largest in the world. Labour partly lost power in 2010, as Corbyn has pointed out, for failing to make the argument against austerity, the Trojan horse for dismantling labor rights and the welfare state. Banks, says Corbyn, crashed the economy, but “we were accepting the idea that the rest of society had to pay for the banking crisis.”

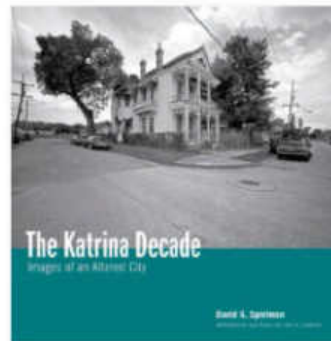
And yet part of the left, in Britain and beyond, also fell into the trap of thinking that Greece’s Syriza could serve as a general example—or a global vanguard. Syriza’s refusal to commit national hara-kiri by taking Greece out of the euro with no currency reserves, a banking system close to collapse, and a thousand refugees landing daily on its shores has met with petulant disdain from some of those who projected too much hope onto the party. “I may have overestimated the competence of the Greek government,” murmured *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, anti-austerian guru and darling of the pro-Syriza opinion pages.

Well, yes, you may have. You may also have underestimated the weight and specificity of Greece’s history, politics, and day-to-day experience, as well as the constraints that the Syriza government faced. And now that Syriza has capitulated—“failed”—I think we’ll see fewer of the solidarity rallies in European cities that so warmed the hearts of those who took part in them, as well as of some miserable Greeks who felt a little less alone. Spain’s Podemos, once seen as Syriza’s sister party, backed away pretty quickly once it understood that Tsipras had his hands around a poisoned chalice. Disappointment is corrosive. Solidarity—or internationalism—has to acknowledge local differences and local realities. Otherwise it’s of limited use, and potentially self-destructive.

Enough pessimism for now. Corbyn’s campaign has added another current to that international groundswell of insurgent politics, whose meanings are not yet clear. If he wins, he may become the cynosure of the anti-austerity left in Europe and beyond; he may help to undermine the neoliberal orthodoxy that even the IMF doubts. But since all politics are local, it’s here in Britain that his success or failure will above all be felt. The stakes are very high. His most urgent tasks will be domestic: to oppose the Tory cuts to social security, benefits, housing, and public services that threaten thousands of families and what’s left of the British welfare state; to end the casualization of labor and exploitation of the young; to rebuild a divided, disoriented, disconnected Labour Party and mobilize new voters. He will have to lead the party through David Cameron’s referendum on the European Union, which may tear all of British politics to shreds, and into an election contested in a landscape no one can yet envision.

There is, perhaps, another parallel with Syriza: a vote for Corbyn is a break, a leap framed partly by a lack of convincing alternatives. “‘Hope,’” wrote Emily Dickinson, “is the thing with feathers.” Corbyn has dared to invite that thing into the room; whether you choose to ride it depends on how much faith you have, and how much you have to lose. ■

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(continued from page 2)

After World War II, the Soviet Union enforced austerity on East Germany, whereas Harry Truman followed the Wilsonian concept and introduced the Marshall Plan to rebuild West Germany. Germany is now the greatest supporter of austerity. Austerity should be shared. Therefore, I suggest the following steps to help Greece and Germany come to terms:

§ The pension contributions of all German civil servants in the former Western Zone should be contributed to the pension funds of the Greek government.

§ All elected officials in Germany should have their salaries reduced by 25 percent, and those funds should be contributed to the Greek central government.

§ Angela Merkel, the greatest advocate of austerity, should have her salary and pensions reduced by 50 percent, and all those funds should go to the Greek central government.

§ All German and European-based international banks that lent to the Greek government, causing the current crisis, should forgive these debts, and all top executives who approved the loans should have their salaries reduced by 59 percent. Also, all bonuses should be contributed to the Greek general fund.

I am sure many Greeks would agree with this as properly sharing austerity. Angela "Clémenceau" Merkel should certainly agree.

DAVID DAWDY
SAN FRANCISCO

Amend This!

In her article "A Better *Roe v. Wade*?" [July 20/27], Katha Pollitt talks about the 19th Amendment and the 14th Amendment but fails to mention the most relevant one: the

13th Amendment. No man will ever be forced to grow a fetus within himself; no woman should be either. This is a form of unpaid servitude: having one's body taken over so that another can derive sustenance from it. If one wants a baby, it is an act of love; if one does not, it is a horror story.

MARIE COBB
MERRITT ISLAND, FLA.

Katha Pollitt writes that marriage equality's time has come "even in Ireland." No doubt it was more deadline pressure than ill will at work, and therefore just a rhetorical flourish, but Pollitt does seem to be availing herself of what Calvin Trillin has elsewhere described as the "sort of easement" that "a lot of New Yorkers who think of themselves as people of unshakable tolerance take" when it comes to the Irish.

Ireland was the first—and remains the only—nation to submit marriage equality directly to its electorate. Every major political party supported a vote to embed the principle in the country's Constitution, and on May 22, the voters endorsed the idea rather resoundingly: 62 to 38 percent.

Thus, "*led* by Ireland" might more accurately have described the rising status of marriage equality in the world.

STEVE MCFARLAND
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

Clarification

In "The Water Belongs to the People" (August 3/10), a sidebar titled "Tapped Out" was intended to illustrate the "average monthly water rate in major US cities." But the phrase was somewhat misleading; the figures actually showed the *combined* water, sewage, and storm-water costs for households in major US cities, not just the water rate.

Books & the Arts.



Daveed Diggs (center) as Thomas Jefferson in *Hamilton*.

JOAN MARCUS

A Modern Major Musical

by ALISA SOLOMON

There are many reasons why Alexander Hamilton, Revolutionary War hero, principal author of *The Federalist Papers*, and America's first treasury secretary, never could have become president. In some quarters, it was blemish enough that he was illegitimate and an immigrant. Born on the Caribbean island of Nevis, he came to New York City in 1774, when he was 17. Then there was his spectacular adulterous affair—an extortionist setup for which he paid considerable hush money, and about which he later produced a 95-page pamphlet detailing the illicit relationship in all its wanton detail in order to prove that the disbursements were not evidence

that he'd embezzled the Treasury, as his opponents contended. Those same adversaries—chiefly Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe, aristocrats who owed their wealth to slavery—vilified the self-made, abolitionist Hamilton as an out-of-touch elitist. Being an intellectual policy wonk and a long-winded, inextinguishable hothead didn't help matters either: At the Constitutional Convention, Hamilton extemporaneously held forth for six nonstop hours. Worst of all, as Ron Chernow writes in his 2004 record-straightening and captivating biography, *Alexander Hamilton*, he “violated what became the first commandment of American politics: thou shalt always be optimistic.... He was incapable of the resolutely uplifting themes that were to become mandation in American politics.”

When the composer, lyricist, and performer Lin-Manuel Miranda went on vaca-

tion in Mexico some seven years ago, he took Chernow's tome as a beach read. A couple of chapters in, reading about Hamilton as a “poor boy from the West Indies [who] commanded attention with the force and fervor of his words,” Miranda saw—and more important, heard—the bragging, swaggering, word-spinning, quick-tempered men of the American Revolution synchronize with the hip-hop rhythms and run-ins that formed the popular sound track of his teen and early adult years. (Miranda was born in 1980.) Soon he was working on a mixtape that mashed up the founding fathers with beat-boxing bruthas.

Invited by the White House in 2009 to perform a number from his Tony Award-winning 2008 musical *In the Heights*, Miranda offered instead a rap tune about Hamilton, who, he said, “embodies hip-hop.” Spoken in the voice of Aaron Burr, the vice president who fatally wounded Hamilton in a duel in 1804, it begins:

Alisa Solomon, director of the arts and culture concentration at the Columbia Journalism School, is the author of Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of “Fiddler on the Roof.”

How does a bastard, orphan, son of
a whore and a
Scotsman, dropped in the middle of
a forgotten
Spot in the Caribbean by
Providence, impoverished, in
squalor,
Grow up to be a hero and a scholar?
The ten-dollar founding father
without a father
Got a lot farther by working a lot
harder
By being a lot smarter
By being a self-starter
By fourteen, they placed him in
charge of a trading charter.

After a few more verses, it continues:

The ship is in the harbor now, see
if you
Can spot him
Another immigrant, comin' up from
the
Bottom
His enemies destroyed his rep,
America
Forgot him
And me? I'm the damn fool that shot
him.

This exposition-packed rap became the electrifying choral opening number of *Hamilton*, the nearly three-hour sung-through bio-show that follows its hero through his quick rise from humble origins to the height of inventing American government—and then his decline as he blusters and blunders at work and in his domestic life and the political winds shift. “I’m just like my country / I’m young, scrappy, and hungry,” Hamilton sings, making explicit the way his own story parallels America’s.

With its top-notch cast of 21 performers in near-constant motion, *Hamilton* played for 15 sold-out weeks at Off Broadway’s Public Theater last winter and opened to rapturous reviews at the Richard Rodgers Theatre on August 6. The Broadway run garnered hefty advance sales of \$30 million, so good luck finding a seat before October, unless you’re willing to shell out around \$350 per ticket, the lowest prices in the resale market.

The show’s popularity is no surprise, considering the dynamism created not only by Miranda’s book, lyrics, and score, but also by a seamless collaboration among director Thomas Kail, choreographer Andy Blankenbuehler, and the design team of David Korins (scenery), Paul Tazewell (costumes), and Howell Binkley (lights). The entire show bursts with youthful, revolutionary energy

on a rustic, wooden unit set with a turntable that helps keep things flowing.

Hamilton is winning its loudest accolades as a “game changer” for bringing rap to Broadway. But that’s not really the primary source of the show’s success, nor of its importance.

Miranda (who also plays the title role) is a clever and daring rhymester, cramming lots of information into most of *Hamilton*’s 34 numbers. (Most musicals have a little more than half as many songs.) He expects you to lean forward and really listen to *Hamilton* (it’s heartening that he does so), and rewards you amply for the effort. Playing with internal and near rhymes as well as perfect ones, Miranda is never just showing off or resting on his assonance; you can glean the story’s narrative range from the line endings alone. Here are just a few of the innumerable examples: “stay in it...bayonet”; “disgust me...discussed me...can trust me”; “however he wants...pièce de résistance”; “war vet...more debt”; “courted me...escorted me...extorted me for a sordid fee”; “resistance...existence...indifference...deliverance.”

Still, it’s not as if hip-hop has never seen the light of the Broadway stage before. *Russell Simmons Def Poetry Jam* enjoyed a six-month run as many as a dozen years ago. *Bring in ’da Noise, Bring in ’da Funk* joined rap to the tradition of tap even earlier. Miranda’s own *In the Heights* (with the book by Quiara Alegria Hudes) fused plenty of rap with the show’s Latin rhythms. Beyond Broadway, works like Will Power’s *Flow* and Rennie Harris’s *Rome and Jewels* go back more than a decade, and a hip-hop theater festival with national scope has been thriving since 2000.

Besides, for all the “check it” “what?” “yo” “unh” “work, work” “uh-huh” “woof woof” “whoa, whoa, yeah” assigned to the chorus in the script, it does not suffice to label *Hamilton* a rap musical because it features a mixture of popular musical styles. Thanks to the arrangements by musical director Alex Lacamoire, the score includes tinkling harpsichords, schmaltzy strings, and lush choral harmonies. The Schuyler sisters—Angelica (Hamilton’s close, perhaps romantic, friend, played by Renée Elise Goldsberry), Eliza (his wife, Phillipa Soo), and Peggy (Jasmine Cephas Jones)—trade fast-talking verses and harmonize on choruses in an R&B groove that sounds like Destiny’s Child; Burr (a smashing, properly smarmy Leslie Odom Jr.) busts out with a fit of envy in the form of a razzmatazz show-tune, “The Room Where It Happens” (commenting on the secret meeting among Hamilton, Jefferson, and

Madison at which American government’s first quid pro quo was bargained). Thomas Jefferson (Daveed Diggs) opens the second act returning from Paris and asking, in a boogie-woogie number, “What’d I Miss?” And there are several (maybe one too many in the second act) belttable ballads. England’s King George (a hilarious Jonathan Groff) pouts about the loss of the colonies in the mode of a bouncy British breakup tune: “What comes next? / You’ve been freed. / Do you know how hard it is to lead? / You’re on your own. / Awesome. Wow. / Do you have a clue what happens now?”

More than the rap element alone, what’s actually exciting the multitudes (or at least the reviewers) is the way rap has been so smoothly incorporated into an old, beloved form. Like any great innovator, Miranda has grafted fresh branches onto a stable trunk, not hacked down the tree. *Hamilton* makes deft use of standard Broadway elements: The opening song is a classic establishing number; Hamilton and his comrades beguile the audience with a charm song; several major characters take a turn at an I want—I am song; romances and their love ballads intertwine with a big-canvas plot. Central themes are reprised (Hamilton’s assertion that “I am not throwing away my shot” is repeated several times, eventually turning from a vow to make the most of every opportunity to an ironic comment on his final gesture in the duel with Burr.) Action moves through the songs—most wittily in the rap battles through which Jefferson and Hamilton debate monetary policy and intervention in the French Revolution. Here’s a sample:

JEFFERSON:

If New York’s in debt—
Why should Virginia bear it?
Huh! Our debts are paid, I’m afraid.
Don’t tax the South cuz we got it
made in the shade.
In Virginia, we plant seeds in the
ground.
We create. You just wanna move our
money around.

HAMILTON:

A civics lesson from a slaver. Hey
neighbor.
Your debts are paid cuz you don’t
pay for labor.
“We plant seeds in the South. We
create.” Yeah, keep ranting.
We know who’s really doing the
planting.
And another thing, Mr. Age of
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From late-20th-century musicals such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita*, Miranda borrows the device of using the title character's nemesis as the narrator. And he doesn't shy away from the blatant tear-jerking of *Les Misérables* magnitude in a couple of moments, such as the death scene of Hamilton's oldest son in 1801, shot in a duel defending his father from calumny, and wife Eliza's forgiveness of his philandering as they mourn their son together—arguably an 11 o'clock number. (This scene is one of several in which Miranda necessarily collapses time, adapting historical events for the sake of dramatic efficiency.) Even the looser uncoiling in Act II of a tightly wound Act I follows form: That's an age-old *bête noire* of the musical theater.

Most of all, Miranda harks back to the golden-age musical and its sense of good cheer. ("Look around look around at how / Lucky we are to be alive right now" is one of Eliza's motifs.) *Hamilton* recalls the spirit of shows staged before edginess and angst were brought into the genre by the likes of Stephen Sondheim or Kander and Ebb—back, that is, to the day when, like American politics, Broadway musicals also followed a commandment to be optimistic and uplifting. The shows may have had dark, even tragic, elements (Jud in *Oklahoma!* or the eviction in *Fiddler on the Roof*, for example), but in the end they left audiences with a good feeling as they celebrated a community that cohered and looked to the future (and even to the rainbow). And often that sense of community and sense of promise came from a wistful idea of America.

The golden-age book musical has long addressed the question of national self-definition. Not every one of these musicals takes up this theme, and often it is presented obliquely, but it has been astonishingly persistent. Many of the most enduring musicals have responded to contemporary currents that invited audiences to reconsider the very meaning of Americanness. There's *Oklahoma!* (1943), with its unifying spirit as the farmer and cowman become friends and the US incorporates Western territories, premiering during a time of war. (A powerfully seething revival directed by Daniel Fish played at this year's Bard SummerScape program.) Or *The Music Man* (1957), with its huckstering disruption of small-town smugness as the American suburbs expanded, or *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), a story of perseverance and persecution in the old country at a time when the United

States was beginning to conceive of itself as a nation of immigrants. (A new production will open this fall on Broadway, directed by Bartlett Sher and starring Danny Burstein.) Another is *1776* (1969), in which John Adams struggles to persuade representatives of the 13 colonies to sign the Declaration of Independence, winning the Best Musical Tony at a time of deep national discord.

Even beyond the golden age, when Broadway's role as a spearhead of popular music weakened and its economic calculus changed, musicals have continued to provide a platform for America to reflect on itself in works that expand the cast of the national narrative—*La Cage aux Folles* in 1983, *Rent* in '96—or to look back historically at the struggles to hold it to its promise (*Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*, 1995; *Ragtime*, 1996; *Caroline, or Change*, 2004; *Assassins*, 2004).

Hamilton not only assumes a place among these productions; it unabashedly asserts that it belongs there. As much as its lyrics allude to rap stars and their songs—there are verbal hat tips to Mobb Deep, the Fugees, Grandmaster Flash, Brand Nubian, and especially the Notorious BIG (whose "Ten Crack Commandments" is remade into "Duel Commandments," which dynamically explains the protocol for affairs of honor)—the show also quotes from the musical-theater canon. George Washington (Christopher Jackson) borrows from *The Pirates of Penzance* when he calls himself the "model of a modern major general"; Hamilton invokes *The Last Five Years* when he pays off his blackmailer, telling him, "Nobody needs to know." Burr gets in two references in a single rhyme as he urges his rebel colleagues to stay calm: "The situation is fraught" (*A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*). "You've got to be carefully taught" (*South Pacific*'s liberal outcry against racism). Quoting *1776*, Hamilton cries, "Sit down, John!" (adding an obscene epithet) as he drops his infamous screed-pamphlet against John Adams onto the floor. I think I spotted a choreographic quote of *1776*, too, in a quick tableau of founders who gather together, then spiral apart.

These nods aren't just a game for devotees of Rap Genius or All That Chat: They place rap in the legacy of the musical theater that *Hamilton* lays a claim to. As the Broadway stage was once a source of Top 40 hits, *Hamilton* insists that contemporary popular music is a rich source for Broadway. Miranda heaps adoration upon the American songbook while introducing a bunch of new pages. All those white male (mostly Jewish) songsters don't have to be shoved aside so that Broadway can hear the rest of America singing.

The composition of *Hamilton*'s company makes this expansive point most emphatically: All the principal roles, except for King George, are played by actors of color. This is not color-blind casting, though that's the phrase numerous articles about the show have employed. Race and ethnicity aren't meant to disappear into irrelevance here; they are significant. True, seeing Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and the rest of the colonial crew played by black, Latino, and Asian-American actors isn't a narrative snag. This is theater, after all, good old-fashioned make-believe. Actors portray specific characters (from whom they differ in myriad ways, even when they're the same race), and audiences follow along. But *Hamilton* wouldn't have clicked with white actors in these roles. The theatrical, corporeal point, which can't be conveyed by the script or score alone, is that America's history—and its future—belong to men and women of color as profoundly as to anyone else.

The gesture parallels that of the painter Kehinde Wiley, who refigures Old Master portraits by swapping out their subjects—white aristocrats—for black men and women from all walks of life. *Hamilton*, too, puts once-absent figures into a familiar frame, reviving the artistic form while at the same time asking us to consider all that we've missed when our traditions made them invisible. If it's a little disappointing that by the end, the show's focus shifts from the issue of what American democracy should look like to who should tell the hero's story, the casting joins these questions inexorably.

This theatrical fact gives *Hamilton* some genuine progressive bona fides. Miranda goes even further to claim them. Early in the play, Hamilton confers with French-born Lafayette about their victories in battle, saying, "Finally on the field. We've had quite a run." And Lafayette replies, "Immigrants..." Then they finish the line in unison while high-fiving each other: "...we get the job done!" Miranda repeatedly finds ways to put the fact of slavery (and Hamilton's ardent opposition to it) into the text—the first reference comes in the play's 10th line. His depiction of Jefferson as a foppish blowhard may be historically inaccurate—Chernow points out that Jefferson hated controversy and was retiring in debates, opting to use proxies for his dirty tricks—but Miranda efficiently reveals him as the cynical manipulator he was. He even finds a way to mention Jefferson's slave mistress, Sally Hemings, having him call out, in his entrance song, "Sally, be a lamb, darlin'" and open a letter for him. And while the story of the founding fathers is a story about men, Miranda

makes a real effort to give Angelica and Eliza Schuyler more agency and inner life than they are typically granted. Blankenbuehler also creates plenty of gender-neutral dancing. While conventions reign in scenes like the ball at which Hamilton meets the Schuyler sisters—which segues beautifully into Hamilton and Eliza’s wedding, as seen through Angelica’s eyes—in the battle sequences, men and women make up the battalions, and their putty-colored breeches and vests match, too.

Why, then, is the show winning raves from the likes of Dick and Lynne Cheney, Rupert Murdoch, and *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan? Conservatives can revel in Hamilton’s role in creating American capitalism, with its credit system, banking, and stock market (never mind his insistence on checks and balances, including regulations, taxation, and the strong federal government that he favored over states’ rights, and his rejection of American exceptionalism); they can cheer on Jefferson as a denouncer of big government and exponent of individual liberties (never mind his rank dishonesty, lack of scruples, and defense of slave-owning). Hamiltonian federalism and Jeffersonian republicanism hardly line up neatly with today’s polarized politics; spectators can choose their champions moment to moment and enjoy the recognition that today’s vituperative debates go back to the country’s founding.

But the deeper answer resides in the optimism and uplift that’s expected in American politics and musicals alike. Like many musicals before it, *Hamilton* offers an appealing wish for a mythic idea: in this case, as Hamilton sings toward the end, a vision of America as “a place where even orphan immigrants can leave their fingerprints and / rise up.” This still happens, of course, but if Hamilton had been sent here today to attend college as he was some 240 years ago, he’d have accrued a huge burden of student-loan debt and would have been kicked back to the Caribbean as soon as his student visa expired.

There’s an earnestness to *Hamilton* that is impossible to resist. While the fake debates of an overlong election season foul the airwaves, it’s a relief to find, at least in the theater, some sincere and energetic grappling with the character of our country. “I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone will sing for me / America, you great unfinished symphony,” Hamilton intones as he dies. For Miranda, the theater is a place that some of those new movements can be written. At the Richard Rodgers, he reminds us, the stakes are high, and we all share in them. ■

The L-Word

by ADINA HOFFMAN

Of the many names given the brutal, black-flag-waving entity currently marauding its way across the rubble of Syria and Iraq, ISIL is the strangest and the most ironic. The L in the acronym favored by the US State Department stands for “Levant,” a term that for centuries referred to a part of the world where cultures met, borders blurred, and religions, languages, and peoples cross-bred—for better or for worse.

In English, the word “Levantine” has long been a pejorative, and at a certain colonial point referred to those upwardly mobile non-Muslim Middle Easterners considered contemptible by commentators of various stripes for being neither here nor there, whether socially or ethically. “Among this minority are to be found individuals who are tainted with a remarkable degree of moral obliquity,” sniffed onetime consul general of Egypt Evelyn Baring back in 1908. Yet for those more recent writers and thinkers who have set out to reclaim the term, such hybridity is the key to what has made the region vital. In his groundbreaking 1993 book *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture*, for instance, Ammiel Alcalay writes of the “fertile symbiosis” and “dense and intricate interconnectedness” of the “old” Levantine world.

Which brings us back to the irony of that L in ISIL: Whether muttlike menace or commendable cosmopolitan, the classic, shape-shifting “Levantine” seems the very opposite of the rigid young zealot now being enlisted to behead captives, rape slaves, and smash ancient statuary in the name of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s viciously monolithic caliphate.

Also at odds with such murderous single-mindedness is the fact that the precise geographic location of the Levant is notoriously hard to pin down. The Arabic word for it is *Sham*, a slippery designation that may refer to modern Syria, the city of Damascus, or so-called Greater Syria, which in historical terms is the land that stretches between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. Etymologically, *Bilad al-Sham* is the “land of the left hand,” as opposed to the “land of the right hand,” Yemen. Both of these terms place Mecca at the center of their compass. Hans Wehr’s *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* confuses directional things further

with a definition of “Sham” that begins “the northern region, the North.” According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “Levant” indicates the “countries of the East,” specifically “the eastern part of the Mediterranean, with its islands and the countries adjoining.” The English word derives from the French *levant*, “rising”—that is, indicating the point where the sun comes up. All of which make “the Levant” a genuinely relative term.

That relativity is made palpable by several powerful Levant-focused literary works that have recently appeared, or reappeared, in English. While these books and the material they collect predate by decades the current mayhem near Mosul, the present situation is obviously a product of the region’s longer chaotic modern history. And as each of these authors reckons with that quicksilver thing she calls “the Levant,” she and her work become worthy of our serious 21st-century attention.

Not that these variable notions of the place could or should be ours. Both the British Olivia Manning (1908–1980) and the Egyptian Jewish Jacqueline Kahanoff (1917–1979) were, by their own accounts, the products of highly fraught cultural situations—which made them as much symptoms of those situations as detached commentators of the same. But each approached the Levant with a canny understanding of both her own personal history and the region’s at large.

First published between 1977 and 1980, and recently reissued by New York Review Books Classics, *The Levant Trilogy* is a keenly intelligent and intensely readable trio of novels that follow a cast of characters and a historical trajectory that the marvelous if underappreciated Manning introduced in her *Balkan Trilogy*. Known together as *The Fortunes of War*, the whole panoramic series is ostensibly fiction, but, at least in terms of the female figure at its heart, it hews so closely to the author’s own experience that one might almost think of it as memoir wearing a bit of well-applied makeup.

Written between 1956 and 1964 and also reissued several years back, the earlier *Balkan Trilogy* unfolds during the initial years of World War II and sends its main British characters first to Bucharest and then scuttling to Athens, the Iron Guard and the German Army close at their heels. *The Balkan Trilogy* ends with a dramatic escape from Europe, as the uncomfortably matched newlyweds Harriet and Guy Pringle and a ragtag crew of

Adina Hoffman’s latest book, Till We Have Built Jerusalem: Architects of a New City, is forthcoming from Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

their compatriots flee Greece in a rusty, overcrowded, undersupplied ship while bombs splash down in the Piraeus harbor all around them. After several days, “The passengers had awakened in Egyptian waters and were struck by the whiteness of the light. It was too white. It lay like a white dust over everything. Disturbed by its strangeness, Harriet felt their lives now would be strange and difficult.”

The Levant that the Pringles find once they disembark—as Olivia Manning and her real-life husband, Reggie Smith, did in April 1941—is not a welcoming haven, but a parched and menacing place of last resort. Even as they settle into a tense routine in the midst of wartime Cairo, the setting continues to be for them little more than a haze of flies and filth: “So Egypt was not only the Sphinx, the lotus columns, the soft flow of the Nile. It was also the deadening discomfort and sickness that blurred these sights so, in the end, one cared for none of them.” That “one” does pointed work here, as Manning seems to speak not just for Harriet but for a whole category of displaced and dyspeptic Englishmen, squinting in the Levantine glare.

It’s tempting to simply write off this account of the sweat and stink of Cairo as Orientalism, boilerplate mid-20th-century Western contempt for a poor, Eastern, mostly Muslim setting. And Manning, for all her worldliness, can often sound utterly squeamish and British. She and her characters make frequent reference, for example, to an unpleasant digestive condition they call “Gypsie tummy”; and when staying at a “Levantine pension of the poorest kind, a place so dark and neglected, everything seemed coated with grime,” Harriet berates Guy for rubbing his forehead after touching a bannister knob, “telling him he might pick up leprosy, smallpox, plague or any of the killer diseases of Egypt.”

The description of the dirty pension as “Levantine” is telling. While over the course of the trilogy, Harriet wanders to Damascus, Beirut, and Jerusalem, she treats the Levant as little more than a geographical given, an alien place where she finds herself stranded. That designation, “Levantine,” meanwhile is meant here as the disdainful Evelyn Baring intended it. In Manning’s prose, the word bobs up almost always accompanied by a knowing sneer whose overtones are vaguely sexual and economic—even faintly whorish.

So it is that the “Levantine ladies” at Groppi’s famous Cairo garden café “came to eye the staff officers who treated it as a home away from home.” One English-

Discussed in This Essay

The Balkan Trilogy

By Olivia Manning.

NYRB Classics. 924 pp. Paper \$22.95.

The Levant Trilogy

By Olivia Manning.

NYRB Classics. 569 pp. Paper \$19.95.

Olivia Manning

A Woman at War.

By Deirdre David.

Oxford. 405 pp. \$45.95.

Mongrels or Marvels

The Levantine Writings of Jacqueline Shobet Kabanoff.

Edited by Deborah A. Starr and Sasson Somekh.

Stanford. 269 pp. \$30.

woman complains that her lover is amusing himself with “some ‘Levantine floosie,’” and a British writer gripes that he’s being cheated by his landlady, “a greedy Levantine hag.” Manning is, to be fair, often recounting what others have said, rather than words she or Harriet might themselves speak—though that line is often smudged. After their stint in Cairo, Manning and Smith moved to Jerusalem, where they lived for three years, and where, in a more explicitly autobiographical 1944 essay, Manning described how “to those of us who had been exhilarated by the Greek fight for freedom, the indifference, waste and dishonesty of the vast, profiteering Levantine population of Cairo was an unending nightmare.”

But Manning was far too subtle a writer to leave it at that. Harriet may “be” Manning, and vice versa. (In a fine new biography of the novelist, *Olivia Manning: A Woman at War*, Deirdre David calls Harriet a “barely disguised fictional surrogate” and describes the novelist’s dismay on hearing that Emma Thompson was slated to play Harriet in a BBC adaptation of the trilogies: “Look at my dainty feet!” she’s reported to have said. “Hers are enormous!”) She was, though, also an exacting and self-aware artist with the perspective afforded both by her own unsentimental, firsthand perceptions and the passage of time. The aspiring 36-year-old novelist who wrote that essay in British Mandate Palestine was not the same as the older and presumably wiser Manning who hunkered down in 1970s London to compose *The Levant Trilogy*, her final work. By then, Nasser had come and gone; Palestine had disappeared; and as she

looked back across the decades and narrated the saga of her years in the Levant, Manning was also describing how the sun that always rises in the east had set on the British Empire. When, in the opening pages of the trilogy, an earnest young soldier enthuses to Harriet about everything the English have done for the Egyptians, she laughs at him: “What have we done for them?... I suppose a few rich Egyptians have got richer by supporting us, but the real people of the country, the peasants and the backstreet poor, are just as diseased, underfed and wretched as they ever were.”

In a scene that’s startling not so much for its sexual sordidness as for the unexpected sympathetic shift it achieves, Harriet winds up tooling around Cairo’s red-light district with an odd-lot group of expats. As an “entertainment,” one of the Englishmen, Castlebar, a poet and occasional university lecturer, arranges for a young man to “perform” for the group with a “half-negro woman in a dirty pink wrapper...fat, elderly, bored and indifferent,” who “threw off the wrapper and lay on a bunk, legs apart.” After quickly doing what’s required of him and pulling on his pants, the young man “crossed to Castlebar, smiling his relief that the show was over. He said: ‘Professor, sir you do not know me, but I know you. At times I am attending your lectures.’”

So flummoxed that he can’t utter a word at first, the professor offers him a cigarette and, after an awkward silence, asks if he often gives these performances:

“No.” The young man looked dismayed by the question then, fearing he might seem impolite, excused himself: “you see, we Egyptians are not like you Europeans. We are liking to do such things in private.”

The Levant Trilogy isn’t a novel (or novels) of ideas. Instead, it’s a sharply observed study of the interplay between foreground and background, the personal and the political, as well as a masterfully rendered account of how one rickety marriage evolves over the years and in the shadow of cataclysmic events. That said, it’s a work that does bring alive various vexing questions about the West’s historical role in the East. In theoretical terms, such a critique may feel like old postcolonial hat—and it’s likely that Manning never really did come to approve of those protean Levantines. Perhaps she believed that they shared the blame for exploiting the “peasants and the backstreet poor” with the Europeans who were just passing through. But the way she embodies these familiar abstractions in her flesh-and-blood people lands like a surprise punch in the gut.

Manning's gripping not-so-fictional fiction has never received the attention it deserves, though her status as what Deirdre David calls "one of the most under-valued and under-read British women novelists of the twentieth century" seems a function of the usual ebbs and flows of literary fashion.

The relative obscurity of Jacqueline Kahanoff is more complicated. Outside a small, devoted circle of writers and academics, she's almost entirely unknown in the United States; in Israel, where Kahanoff spent the last 25 years of her life, she enjoyed a serious—if somewhat underground—reputation as a writer's writer and not-quite-public intellectual. While never a household name, she did exert a strong, quiet influence on several generations of local novelists and thinkers.

Born in Cairo into an Iraqi and Tunisian Jewish family, Kahanoff wrote primarily in English, though until the recent US publication of *Mongrels or Marvels*, a collection of what its editors call her "Levantine writings," her work was available only in anthologized English excerpts and in Hebrew translation, published first in journals beginning in the 1950s, then in book form in 1978. The Israeli writer Ronit Matalon featured a character named Jacqueline Kahanoff in her 1995 novel, *The One Facing Us*, reproducing without comment several lengthy passages from the writer's essays; another collection of Kahanoff's translated journalism appeared in Israel in 2005. Meanwhile, her own English words have been little more than a rumor: Before now, her only book to appear in its entirety in English was her single completed novel, *Jacob's Ladder*, a raw but compelling bildungsroman published in 1951 in the United States and England and currently out of print. *Mongrels or Marvels*, thoughtfully compiled by scholars Deborah Starr and Sasson Somekh, allows English readers at last to assess a generous gathering of Kahanoff's work on its own intriguing terms.

Kahanoff, néé Jacqueline Shohet, was educated in French schools, spoke English with her British nanny, and was very much a member of that liminal Levantine bourgeoisie for which Manning had such scorn. By her own account, she was "not Egyptian," though she moved easily around the polyglot Cairo of her day. "When I was a small child," she writes, "it seemed natural that people understood each other although they spoke different languages, and were called by different names—Greek, Moslem, Syrian, Jewish, Christian, Arab, Italian, Tunisian, Armenian."

Utopian as such a genially pluralistic society may sound, the Egypt where she came

of age was as stifling as it was diverse; it was also—as she and her peers saw clearly—poised to explode. And that inevitable eruption was one whose causes she understood, but whose results she knew would exclude her. As she would later write: "even though we sympathized with the Moslem nationalists' aspirations we did not believe them capable of solving the real problems of this [Egyptian] society, and for this they could not forgive us."

The "they" and "us" here are at once refreshing for their honesty and startling for their paternalism. "We"—that is, Kahanoff and her kind—believed wholeheartedly in Europe and its "civilizing" powers; "they," for their part, did not. By the time Kahanoff wrote this, in Israel in the late 1950s, her attitude toward her earlier convictions was tinged with a certain darkness, as if now she realized how blinkered she and her privileged Cairene cohort had been. While she was very much the product of her colonial education, she had, over the years—and since leaving Egypt—come to feel decidedly un-European. So it was that she could also write of how, as children, "we learned nothing about ourselves or what we should do. We did not know how it had happened that Jewish, Greek, Moslem, and Armenian girls sat together to learn about the French Revolution, *patrie, liberté, égalité, fraternité*. None of us had experienced any of these things. Not even our teachers really believed these words had anything to do with our lives."

Her sense of alienation wasn't just a function of her role as a well-heeled English- and French-speaking Jew in a poor, largely Arabic-speaking Muslim society, or as a dyed-in-the-wool Middle Easterner being schooled as if she were *une jeune fille* in Páree. She was curious and intellectually independent in ways that made life difficult for a girl in the sheltered confines of her particular class.

As was expected of her, she married young, but this was her ticket out: Kahanoff left Egypt for the United States with her new husband in 1940. Seeking refuge elsewhere, she must practically have passed the refugee-seeking Olivia Manning and *her* new husband in the Alexandria harbor. As Kahanoff would eventually explain in "A Generation of Levantines," her signature essay cycle: "Perhaps, one day, I would be able to write about this Egypt I both loved and hated, the frail little world, seemingly so perfect, but in reality so rotten that it had to fall apart—to give birth to one of which I might feel a part. But first I would have to assess my generation in search of itself, and this I could only do from afar." All her most lasting work was written once she was, so to speak, out of Egypt.

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"God shouldn't be put
in charge of everything
until we get to know
Him a little better."

—Kurt Vonnegut

The Nation. November 28, 1981



"We have to have fun while
trying to stave off the forces
of darkness because we
hardly ever win, so it's the
only fun we get to have."

—Molly Ivins

The Nation. November 17, 2003



UPGNation.com

Soon divorced, Kahanoff went to college and studied for a journalism degree at Columbia, wrote fiction, and befriended various European refugee intellectuals in New York. After a short period in Paris, she and her second husband settled in Israel in 1954, moving initially to the isolated, working-class desert town of Beersheba.

Replicating in a striking manner the cultural aloofness of her generation in Egypt—"we were," she'd write of the muddled verbal milieu of her childhood, "a people without a language"—she never really learned Hebrew; her Arabic was poor. And though she'd chosen to live in Israel, Kahanoff was hardly a card-carrying Zionist. According to those who knew her, the writer's refined and somehow aristocratic bearing was at distinct odds with her scrappy new surroundings. Her literary sensibility was also peculiar to the context: Her best essays are composed in a belletristic, personal, and—for lack of a better term—"feminine" style whose indirect and graceful tack seems to this day foreign to the tough-talking Israeli atmosphere. While she was certainly engaged in a kind of polemic, the tone of her often memoiristic prose was gentle and contemplative; she didn't shout. And, most important, she chose to write about the place she had come from (Egypt) and the place where she'd landed (Israel) not as two enemy entities locked in a struggle to the death, but as part of the same geographical and cultural continuum—one that extended, as the medieval trade routes had, all around the Mediterranean.

Mild as that sounds, Kahanoff was proposing something radical for her moment. In many ways, it's radical now. During the same years that Polish-born, then-prime minister David Ben-Gurion was sternly warning about the dangers of Israel's "Levantinization" and promising "to fight against the spirit of the Levant, which corrupts individuals and societies," Kahanoff was attempting to reclaim the L-word and make it a label to be proud of, in all its complexity. There was, she insisted, no shame in mixing, in crossing over, in being in between: Such hybridization was, in fact, Israel's great and maybe only hope. The country's Ashkenazi elite should, she wrote, stop pretending that the Jewish state was some fortresslike bastion of Western Enlightenment values, besieged on all sides by purportedly "irrational" societies, and instead embrace its place as part of a wider Middle Eastern expanse.

What's more, Eastern Jews like Kahanoff

and the hundreds of thousands of other recent arrivals from Morocco, Iraq, and other nearby lands could, she insisted, serve as a kind of bridge or model—as natives of the region and heirs to a developed tradition of cultural symbiosis. For now (the year was 1959), these "oriental Jews" suffered from what she described as a form of internal colonialism: condescension and discrimination at the hands of the country's "well-established old timers." The "Levantinization" that Kahanoff advocated would work to spread power more equitably within Israel itself and to bring the new nation into a more dynamically integrated relationship with its surroundings.

A great deal of history has lumbered by since Kahanoff wrote, and some of her ideas seem hopelessly rosy or reductive when one thinks of the current bloody state of things both within Israel/Palestine and throughout the Middle East. Given her sophisticated reading of internal Israeli politics, she could be blind to other critical local dynamics. After 1967, she put forth unsettlingly patronizing notions—for instance, about how Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza might benefit Arab farmers by teaching them "new techniques of agricultural production." Her refusal to wrestle more critically with the way Israel controls Palestinian land and lives, along with her idealized call for a Levant that might exist beyond the predictable rhetorical realm of "the conflict," have unfortunately made it possible in recent years for certain Israeli intellectuals to adopt (and, I'd argue, twist) her ideas and see them as an invitation to avoid the hard questions—that is, forget the Occupation and ignore the Arabs. According to the proponents of this weirdly wishful brand of Levantinism, Israel might most comfortably find its place as part of a sun-dappled, wine-sipping Mediterranean idyll that includes pristine Greek beaches and pretty Italian ports, but not Gaza, with its siege, its sewage, its suffering.

Kahanoff is no longer here to see how things have evolved and to speak for herself, but it's hard to imagine a writer as clear-eyed and lucid as she was averting her gaze or pocketing her pen in the face of such difficult realities. In a way, her "soft" style and her emphasis on the important role played historically by the region's minorities have made it easier for such evasions to take hold in her name.

Yet however dated or wrongheaded some of her ideas now seem, the core of her thinking is still startling and apt. While Eastern Jews now wield much more power than they did in Israel's early years, and a

good deal of "mixing" of the sort Kahanoff urged has taken place within the country's Jewish population, certain very basic prejudices persist in the realms of high culture, higher education, religious norms, social welfare, and national self-definition. Never mind how much cheerfully syncretized "Eastern" music pours forth from the radios of Tel Aviv, or how many plates of hummus the average Dimona-dweller consumes monthly; when it comes to how the Jewish past is taught in schools and perceived at large, the Holocaust and the early "heroic" years of European Zionism figure much more centrally than do several millennia of rich and varied Eastern Jewish literature, philosophy, and social history. The "us or them" rhetoric of Ben-Gurion's era has come to pervade every aspect of Israeli life. Unabashed racism against Arabs within the country is rampant, as are more subterranean forms of what Sephardic intellectual activist and cultural commentator David Shasha calls "Arab Jewish self-hatred." By this, he means the tendency of so many Eastern Jews to adopt Ashkenazi frames of reference and suppress their own multifarious cultural past. Sadly enough, some of the most aggressive bigotry against local Arabs comes from Israeli Jews whose grandparents spoke Arabic as their mother tongue. The idea of Israel's integration into a kind of open Middle Eastern union seems less likely now than ever, and not only because of the bunker that Israel has made of itself. Throughout the wider Levant, violence, repression, extremism, and fear of any sort of other—Yazidis, Assyrians, Kurds, Copts, members of the Muslim Brotherhood—are of course raging.

Which may be exactly why it seems more important now than ever to reckon with Kahanoff's words and her basic vision of the region as a place that is "not exclusively Western or Eastern, Christian, Jewish, or Moslem." While there still flickers a chance to save or even just honor something of the abundantly variegated cultural reality that has existed there for thousands of years, it's worth considering her own definition of the Levant, which "because of its diversity...has been compared to a mosaic—bits of stone of different colors assembled into a flat picture. To me," as she put it in one of the last essays she wrote before her death, "it is more like a prism whose various facets are joined by the sharp edge of differences, but each of which...reflects or refracts light." In these dark days, as monomaniacs on all sides attempt to shatter that prism, we can at least stop and try to absorb what remains of the light. ■



Black Panthers on parade at a Free Huey rally in Defermery Park in West Oakland, July 28, 1968.

Tragedy and Showbiz

by STUART KLAWANS

Television images of the 1965 Watts riots jolt across the screen toward the beginning of Stanley Nelson's magnificent documentary *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, as a baritone newscaster declaims the obvious: "Relations between police and Negroes throughout the country are getting worse." Well, yes, assuming that "relations" meant the rise and fall of billy clubs in white hands onto black skulls, the forward swing of rifle butts from white shoulders into black chests. The archival montage goes on for only a few seconds—this time, at least—but it's so awful that it feels like a year. Or 50, if you've been following the reports from Ferguson, Baltimore, Staten Island.

So you walk into a different theater to catch F. Gary Gray's *Straight Outta Compton*—a sometimes buoyant, sometimes soggy fictional account of the fortunes of the gangsta-rap group NWA—and what do you see? White cops shoving young black men over the hoods of cars, jerking arms behind black torsos, rubbing black faces onto cement. Are relations getting worse, or staying at the same damned level? Given the temporal continuity of the two films—Nelson's ends for all practical purposes in the mid-1970s, while Gray's effectively takes up the story 10 years later—the least you can say is that history repeats itself: the first time as tragedy, the second as show business.

Which is not to deny the canny fashion sense that the Panthers bring to American political life in Nelson's film, or the outrage that comes booming from NWA in *Straight*

Outta Compton. Gray revels in the righteous indignation of Ice Cube, NWA's best-known lyricist (and one of the movie's producers), especially when the character rebuffs the ignorance of white scolds. NWA is neither exploiting gang violence nor glorifying it, Ice Cube insists again and again (*Straight Outta Compton* is nothing if not repetitive); the group is reflecting the reality outside its front door. As for the Panthers' style, "That look... became a hit," Kathleen Cleaver proudly recalls in Nelson's documentary, smiling at the memory of how young black people across America, whether in or out of the party, suddenly had to have a natural, a beret, and a black leather jacket.

Of course, it's useful—maybe even necessary—in movement politics to have both depth of purpose and theatrical appeal. But to portray the Panthers, Nelson has to encompass all this and much more: the quasi-delusional recklessness and disciplined community work, the ego-driven squabbling at the top and hopeful courage in the rank and file. It's a near-impossible task—and yet he succeeds in creating a coherent picture of the messiest, most contentious radical group of a chaotic era, and arguably its most consequential. "We know the party we were in," cautions onetime Panther leader Ericka Huggins at the start of the film, suggesting that Nelson is facing the proverbial problem of getting six blind men to describe an elephant. By the end of the film, he has very coolly put that elephant back into the room.

Call it a trick of montage. Nelson and editor Aljernon Tunsil have a magician's

touch for giving life to period music and archival images, as well as a scholar's resourcefulness in digging them up. When the voice-over explains the Panthers' earliest exploits—trailing police patrols around Oakland with weapons in hand (perfectly legal at the time, under California's open-carry statute) to discourage the use of excessive force—you see part of the scene in footage shot from inside a Panther cruiser. When interview subjects recount the incident that first brought the Panthers to national attention—striding with their rifles onto the floor of the State Assembly in Sacramento (sheer inadvertence: They were looking for the gallery)—you watch the episode unfold through perhaps half a dozen visual sources, both homemade and commercial, which take you from the moment of arrival in the parking lot to the politicians' denunciations.

To such materials, Nelson adds a wealth of present-day interviews with former Panthers (some of them practiced in their recollections, others touchingly candid), along with newspaper and magazine clippings, excerpts from government documents, writings by anonymous young party members, and testimonies from historians, movement lawyers, journalists, police, even a retired FBI agent. I can't call the research comprehensive; party cofounder Bobby Seale seems to have been unavailable for interview, and there is deafening silence about the known murders committed by Panthers, with or without direct orders. Still, Nelson has compiled more than enough information to present an account that is admiring when it comes to the idealism and self-sacrifice of many party members, and notably unflinching when it comes to the details.

In the words of various witnesses, the party's growth was too rapid and undirected. ("Nobody asked these people, 'Why are you here? What do you want to accomplish?'"") The most prominent spokesperson, Eldridge Cleaver, was uncontrollable (or flat-out "crazy," in the laughing opinion of former Young Lord Felipe Luciano), and a cult of personality was fostered around jailed cofounder Huey P. Newton ("a fucking maniac," in the words of another party veteran). The rank and file, concludes one of the historians, did not have the leaders they deserved.

To the seething despair that settled into the Panthers' hearts after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., add the desperation instilled by police raids, relentless spying, spurious prosecutions, manipulated suspicions and outright murder, all orchestrated from Washington, DC, by J. Edgar Hoover. No doubt the darkest episode in Nelson's film, and perhaps its core, is the tale of Fred

Hampton, chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Panthers, who died as the direct result of Hoover's COINTELPRO operations. The rare leader who was worthy of his followers, the 21-year-old Hampton—inspired in his oratory and gifted at building coalitions—was betrayed by his bodyguard (an FBI informer) and executed in bed in 1969 by officers of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office.

Maybe this is as good a moment as any to jump ahead to NWA and its chart-busting hit, "Fuck tha Police."

NWA didn't sell music so much as authenticity—its audience was buying the thrill of hearing brutal truths about black America shouted in the language of the street, by people who knew—and authenticity is a promise as well of *Straight Outta Compton*, made manifest in everything from its scenes of police mayhem (including multiple showings of the Rodney King video) to the casting of O'Shea Jackson Jr. in the role of his father, Ice Cube. You're meant to feel that the bass on NWA's tracks sounds like a police battering ram breaking down the door of a drug house (one of the first things to happen in the movie), or to hear Dr. Dre's percussive turntable-scratching as another kind of rat-a-tat.

Yet despite its striving for the reality effect, *Straight Outta Compton* begins much like a summer blockbuster from the Marvel universe, introducing its quickly characterized superheroes one after another: pugna-cious, fast-talking drug-runner Eazy-E (Jason Mitchell), dutiful son and sonic dreamer Dr. Dre (Corey Hawkins), and smoldering, watchful scribbler Ice Cube. Once these legendary figures team up and unite their uncanny powers, it's only a matter of time before something becomes airborne: the camera, in this case, which at the literal and figurative high point of *Straight Outta Compton* dives over the heads of the crowd at a Detroit arena, swoops around the stage where NWA is performing "Fuck tha Police," and soars back out again.

This is F. Gary Gray's directorial ecstasy, which comes rather too early in the proceedings for the movie's good. Liberated by NWA's full-throated denunciation of police racism, and especially by the group's defiance of police orders never to perform that number, Gray leaves the Earth behind and brings you along with him. After that, you've got about a two-hour slog left, through contract disputes, management problems, professional rivalries, and a lot of standard-issue showbiz parties.

But the memory of the flight over the Detroit arena remains; and if you see *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, it might connect with another moment of defiance

and liberation. In December 1966, just four days after the execution of Fred Hampton, Los Angeles police deployed their recently organized SWAT team in its first major raid, targeting a Panther headquarters. This time the Panthers were awake and prepared. Objectively, the best that can be said for their resistance is that the ensuing four-hour standoff ended with all of them alive, though in police custody. No newly flourishing headquarters sprang up in the ruins that the SWAT team left behind. Nationally, in fact, the Panthers were heading toward schism, disarray, and effective demise, on what turned out to be a three-year schedule. But for at least one of the party members in that siege, Wayne Pharr, the shoot-out was a peak moment never before experienced. "I felt free," he says.

Watching these films today, in the wake of the killings in Ferguson, Baltimore, Staten Island, I'm struck by the distances that we have and have not traveled, and by the urgency and inadequacy of expressing outrage. I'm willing to accept the authenticity of *Straight Outta Compton*, even in Marvel-universe form, and readily acknowledge that NWA's music has felt liberating for millions of people; but I also think it's significant that the movie devolves so thoroughly from superhero exploits to a story about business. As the closing montage makes clear with its testimonials to NWA, the movie's subject ultimately isn't freedom, or even free expression, but success.

The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution is a deeper and better-made film, and consequently more challenging. While acknowledging that the Panthers tapped a vein of anger with very mixed results, sometimes failing to channel either the rage or themselves, Nelson shows you what a mass-based radical politics can feel like, and reminds you that you haven't seen its like for a while. Judging from the evidence, I'd say our era is post-NWA more than post-Panther, and that Black Lives Matter is still not so much a movement as a social-media campaign.

Straight Outta Compton has been playing in theaters "everywhere," which is also the general location where you can hear NWA's music. *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* goes into theatrical release in September, beginning with a run at Film Forum in New York.

As all the world has come to know, except in areas controlled by the Taliban and ISIL, Amy Schumer has a buxom figure and a demolition-derby contestant's attitude toward sexual propriety. Combined with the juvenile aspects of her face—the short, stubby

nose, the kewpie-doll cheeks—these attributes can make it hard for you to decide whether her development is arrested or precocious. She has it both ways in *Trainwreck*, the Judd Apatow-directed vehicle she wrote for herself, playing a woman who learned early about men's loose ways and has been following them enthusiastically ever since.

I am all for *Trainwreck*, if only because it's one of a handful of films that popped up this summer in which a woman played the lead and talked about some of what she wants. But it wasn't quite as funny as I'd hoped—Schumer never turned my laughter into a yelp of incredulity, as Chris Rock did in *Top Five*—and I felt disappointed that the ultimate dare for her character was to accept a man's faithful love, even though he was a nice-looking, internationally renowned surgeon.

So where taboo-breaking is concerned, the sex-education movie to which I gave my heart was *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*, Marielle Heller's adaptation of a graphic novel by Phoebe Gloeckner. Starring the remarkable Bel Powley, a London-born actress in her early 20s who easily gets away with playing a 15-year-old San Francisco native, the movie is the story of young Minnie Goetze's awakening to many aspects of life: first her sexual possibilities, and through them the frailty of her mother, the stupid spinelessness of her mother's boyfriend, the unreliability of her contemporaries, and above all her vocation as an artist, which eventually puts the rest into place.

The year is 1976, which helps explain why the mother and boyfriend (Kristen Wiig and Alexander Skarsgård) don't seem quite grown up. Mom is still trading on her good looks while looking for a good time; the boyfriend has been taking instruction in irresponsibility through the EST seminar; and any substantial sum of money that comes into the old junk-shop-furnished house is likely to result in a party, with plenty of wine, weed, and coke. Minnie—short, blue-eyed, nubile, and impatient—is pretty much left to pursue whatever she likes. That might be cartooning—the drawings, created for the film by Sara Gunnarsdottir, spring to life throughout the movie—or it might be sex with Mom's boyfriend.

Directed by Heller with a winningly light touch, *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* doesn't aim to shock, but neither does it play for laughs. It's a comedy in the deeper sense: a story about the unstoppable vitality of the young, and the way one particular girl, despite everything, discovers how to use all the energies she's got. ■

SHELF LIFE

by **ANDRÉ NAFFIS-SAHELY**

THE BEST SCIENCE-FICTION WRITERS ARE the peripheral prophets of literature—outsiders who persuade us to explore an often uncomfortable vision of the future that shows us not only what might be, but also what should never be allowed to happen, thereby freeing our imaginations from the shackles of our blind rush toward so-called progress.

One such prophet lives 90 miles off the coast of Florida, in Havana, and goes by the name of Yoss. In *A Planet for Rent*, translated from the Spanish by David Frye (Restless Books; paper \$15.99), which is set, a little too closely for comfort, sometime in the 21st century, Earth is about to face total collapse, but luckily for humans, this hasn't gone unnoticed: "The minds of the galaxy had been keeping an eye on humans for thousands of years. Without interfering. Waiting until they were mature enough to be adopted by the great galactic family. But when the total destruction of Earth seemed inevitable, they broke their own rules and jumped in to stop it." Although humans initially put up a fight, they can't defeat the extraterrestrials, who believe that because "terrestrials were incapable of intelligent self-government or of using their natural resources rationally, from that moment on they would cease to be an independent culture. And so they entered the status of a Galactic Protectorate." Soon enough, a Planetary Tourism Agency is put in charge of global government, and slogans like "*Welcome to Earth, the most picturesque planet in the galaxy. Hospitality is our middle name!*" become ubiquitous. At first it seems that this arrangement might benefit humanity, but the truth is far more complicated. As Yoss explains, "Xenoid altruism wasn't what had motivated Contact.... This was commercial warfare: for new technologies, for markets, for clients, for cheap labor. Mankind had

been a loser in that conflict from the get-go. And as such, it was condemned to be a client, never a rival, not even potentially." Earth is reduced to a holiday resort where "enormous polyps" from Aldebaran or humanoids from Tau Ceti and Proxima Centauri buy sex or cheap trinkets. It's the sort of place where Michel Houellebecq's miserable middle-class Frenchmen would go on vacation.

Written from 1993 to '98, the 14 stories in *A Planet for Rent* are both a thinly veiled critique of Western imperialism and a study

funny, scathing, perceptive, and yet also heart-wrenchingly compassionate. Yoss's interlinked portraits of our ill-starred descendants fighting for their lives against venal Xenoid colonialists are instantly appealing, from "The Rules of the Game," in which a chatty sergeant in Planetary Security talks a young recruit's ear off about how corruption really happens, to "Social Worker," which tells the story of Buca, a prostitute who, after a lifetime of being assaulted by lecherous aliens, finally manages to buy herself a one-way ticket out by allowing an insectoid hermaphrodite named Selshaliman to use her as an incubator; once the eggs hatch, the larvae will "eat her guts without a care in the world."

Other standout stories are "Escape Tunnel," in which three misfits try to pilot a homemade spaceship out of the solar system—mirroring the tragic tales of the many Cuban *balseros* who tried to float to Florida on rafts in the mid-1990s—and "Aptitude Assessment," in which Alex, a self-styled "idiot savant," discovers "teletransportation" and uses it to blackmail the government of Tau Ceti into granting him citizenship. "The Earth is sick," Alex says during his immigration interview. "The days when we thought the future belonged to us are over. Now we're not even the masters of our present day, and the glories of the past aren't enough to live on. Artists, athletes, scientists...every human who has some physical or intellectual talent dreams of using it as a ticket from Earth and toward making their way in the galaxy. Even if they have to swallow their pride and drink the bitter poison of exile and humiliation in lands of other races."

A Planet for Rent is the inaugural title in Restless Books' "Cuban Science Fiction" series, and readers can look



Yoss.

LES ÉDITIONS MNÉMOS

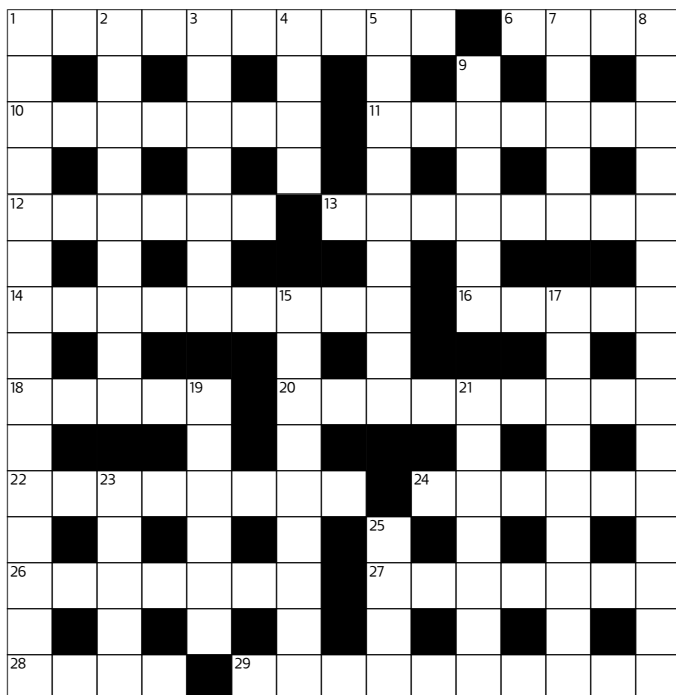
of Cuba during the "Special Period" in the 1990s, when the collapse of the Soviet Union sent the Castros' island into an economic free fall marked by crippling shortages and the creation of a deeply unpopular dual economy—one for tourists based on the US dollar, another for locals based on the non-convertible peso—causing a growing divide that persists to this day. Yet, as ever, there were also benign consequences: less fossil-fuel dependency, a decline in cardiovascular diseases, a thriving hip-hop culture, and some of the best sci-fi written anywhere since the 1970s—the present book being a prime example. Like its author, a bandanna-wearing, muscle-bound *roquero*, *A Planet for Rent* is completely sui generis: riotously

forward to the publication of Yoss's *Super Extra Grande* sometime next year. Writers like Yoss, here making his first appearance in English, successfully challenge our notion of what "serious" literature is, reminding us that the answers to the most pressing questions of our day may be found in the unlikely quarters—something that should be kept in mind considering that the planet as a whole could be headed for its own Special Period. In the meantime, to quote Yoss, it's time to "step on up, ladies and gents... for rent, one planet that's lost its way in the race for development, that showed up at the stadium after all the medals had been handed out, when all that was left was the consolation prize of survival." ■

André Naffis-Sahely is the translator of the English edition of Alessandro Spina's The Confines of the Shadow.

Puzzle No. 3372

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

- 1 Graph to once again take advantage of color (10)
- 6 Touched fabric (4)
- 10 Creature you might find in Australia: dead ape (7)
- 11 Verify argument against a company (7)
- 12 Tuna salad infested with Rhode Island rodent (6)
- 13 Where some clergy live, a tabloid is taken in by wrongdoing (8)
- 14 Actor is angry, flailing about in horse-drawn vehicle (4,5)
- 16 Bird repressing a cry of pain, namely... (2,3)
- 18 ...a warning from Princess Irene (5)
- 20 Writing, as I foment trouble! (9)
- 22 *Adventure in Space* ruined by commercial exploitation, at first (8)
- 24 Bricks bother the elite, for the most part (6)
- 26 Insignificant four (or six) involved in experiment (7)
- 27 Location in Rome that's entirely water, we hear (4,3)

28 *The Return of the King*? Sounds like part of an old movie (4)

29 Comes back to cut short the psychic distress of the post-war generation? (10)

DOWN

- 1 Loudly sing like Bing Crosby, formerly, with more sodden knitwear (4-4,7)
- 2 Cheat as red alert swirls around university (9)
- 3 Losing one's composure, drink a round (7)
- 4 Seven minus one is _____! (4)
- 5 Church worker's pouch is light brown, and red inside (9)
- 7 Generically keeping name (5)
- 8 Recklessly use up tome, absorbed by T.S. Eliot's stormy quality (15)
- 9 Joint action assumed unbroken (6)
- 15 Look after confused admiral (or animal?) (9)
- 17 SometWBg helpful for getting clean (9)
- 19 Sleep on relative's linen (6)
- 21 Musician: "FDR lied unconscionably" (7)
- 23 Following Clinton's lead, conceal reproach (5)
- 25 Fancy woman with that guy (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3371

ACROSS 1 MEDI(T)ATION 6 2 defs.

10 AV(I)A + TOR 11 F + EARFUL

12 THY + ME 13 A(PART MEN)T

15 [e]GRAS (rev.) + SHOPPER

16 & 17 T AND EM 18 "Appalachian"

21 anag. 23 SO(DA)S 25 HOSANN

(anag.) + A 26 rev. hidden 27 R[ed]

INK 28 PAR(KING)LOT

DOWN 1 MEA(N)T 2 D + AIRY +

FAR + M 3 2 defs. 4 TORN + A DO

5 O(F)F + AMP 7 hidden 8 anag.

9 BACTER(I)A (bear, art anag.) 14 GO

+ D + FATHER 15 SPAR + TANS

16 T(HI + RD)RAIL 19 PRO RAT + A

20 L(OGB)OOK (bog anag.) 22 MA +

SON 23 2 defs. 24 SP(L)IT (tips rev.)



Kosman & Picciotto explain what they're up to at thenation.com/article/solving-nations-cryptic-crosswords/.

You deserve a factual look at . .

A Cheater's Dream: Can't Trust, Can't Verify

Lying is Iran's diplomatic tool of choice. No wonder most Americans don't believe the Obama Deal will stop Iran from cheating—or catch them when they do.

Iran has cheated shamelessly on all its international nuclear agreements. Not only does President Obama's Iran Deal fail as promised to halt Iran's nuclear weapons program, its verification regime is so weak it will be impossible to catch most violations. But even if we catch them, we have little power to stop them. It adds up to a deadly dangerous deal.

What are the facts?

Despite strict international sanctions and treaties, Iran has operated covert illegal nuclear facilities since the mid-1980s. In 2002, Iranian dissidents revealed to a surprised world that the Islamic Republic was building a uranium enrichment plant at Natanz, as well as a heavy water plant at Arak, the likes of which is capable of producing plutonium for nuclear bombs. In 2009, the U.S. and other Western states discovered Iran constructing another secret enrichment plan—this one fortified deeply underground—known as Fordow. Notwithstanding all evidence to the contrary, Iran has insisted its nuclear program is peaceful. While Iran is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) found back in 2003 that “Iran's many failures and breaches of its obligations to comply with its NPT Safeguards Agreement...constitute non-compliance.”

Indeed, in 2003 then nuclear negotiator and now president Hassan Rouhani bragged that “While we were talking with the Europeans in Teheran” about preventing Iran from enriching uranium, “we were installing equipment in parts of the [uranium conversion] facility at Isfahan.”

In just the past year during the P5+1 negotiations, despite generous easing of international sanctions offered as incentive, Iran has cheated at least three times on related agreements. First, in violation of the Joint Plan of Action, which prohibited Iran from enriching uranium in new centrifuges, the IAEA in November 2014 caught the Islamic Republic using advanced, high-powered IR-5 centrifuges. Second, in February 2015, Iran was discovered to have about 300 kilograms of banned, gaseous low-enriched uranium, which can be used as reactor fuel. Third, Iran swore to the IAEA it would answer questions about the Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of its previous nuclear programs, but to date it has mocked this commitment, revealing virtually nothing.

This consistent history of lying, cheating and weaseling out of

“Only if the U.S. Congress defeats the Iran Deal can the international community avoid a nuclear-armed terror state—and the near certainty of a war.”

agreements to limit its nuclear weapons program engenders profound distrust of Iran's “agreement” to the Obama Iran Deal.

If we don't trust, can we verify? If Iran wants the \$150 billion in sanctions relief it is promised for adhering to this deal and if it has every intention of complying, why would it refuse to allow the “anytime, anywhere” inspections promised by President Obama? Yet the P5+1 abandoned strict inspection

protocols, including the ability to inspect military sites, in exchange for a scheme by which Iran can delay any request to inspect other secret facilities for 24 days minimum (and possibly much longer) in a bureaucratic jungle—plenty of time to spirit away all

traces of disallowed nuclear activity.

What's worse, astoundingly, neither the United States nor any of the P5+1 nations will be involved in inspecting Iranian nuclear sites. Instead, inspections will be administered by the IAEA, which has negotiated secret terms for these protocols with Iran, the wily sanctions evader, which we will never see.

But what if we actually do catch Iran cheating? Even if Iran is caught violating Iran Deal terms, the P5+1 has tied its own hands. The only penalty the P5+1 can levy against Iran is a “snapback” return to the sanctions—which could take months of negotiations among P5+1 partners. What's more, at the instant sanctions are reinstituted, Iran has the right to abandon the entire agreement, flip its centrifuge switches and return to full-speed nuclear weapons development. By then it will have collected its \$150-billion reward and have little left to lose, but a nuclear arsenal to gain. With such stakes, it's certain no Western nation will want to upend the agreement for the kind of small, consistent incremental violations that have characterized so much of Iran's cheating in the past. We can also be sure that once British, French, German and Russian firms have lined up multi-billion-dollar oil and weapons contracts with Iran, they will be reluctant to kill those lucrative programs by reinstituting sanctions.

In short, if Iranians are determined to cheat, as they surely are, this deal leaves U.S. allies no means to catch them or force them to comply. Only if the U.S. Congress defeats the Iran Deal can the international community avoid a nuclear-armed terror state—and the near certainty of a Middle East or world war. Call your Senators and Representative to voice your opposition today: (202) 225-3121.

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Facts and Logic About the Middle East

P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159

Gerardo Joffe, President ■ James Sinkinson, Vice President

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WHAT DOES 42% MEAN TO YOU?

The figure “forty-two percent” has loomed large in recent headlines. That figure represents two alarming data points: **the percentage of honeybees in managed U.S. colonies that mysteriously died in the past year**, the highest rate in nine years, and **the percentage of U.S. workers that make less than \$15 an hour**, according to a new study published by the National Employment Law Project (NELP).

42%

Forty-two percent signifies the proximity of a tipping point. Although seemingly disconnected, the accidental coincidence of these trends provides an opportunity to step back and broaden our perspective. Both honeybees and the middle-class play indispensable roles in our society. Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), the mysterious disappearance of honeybees in recent years, represents a threat to the very foundation of our food systems. Approximately one in every three mouthfuls in our diet benefits from honeybee pollination, which adds more than \$15 billion to the value of our crops each year. The NELP figure represents the disappearance of the American middle class, once the envy of the world and the foundation of our economic growth and stability.

When capitalists perform their act without a safety net, we all bear the risk. That was what happened in 1929 and in 2008. In the aftermath of the most recent financial crisis, Judge Richard Posner, a leading proponent of the integration of free-market economic thinking and law, wrote: “We are learning... that we need a more active and intelligent government to keep our model of a capitalist economy from running off the rails.” Or, perhaps we need to re-learn the lessons of the Great Depression. The minimum wage is one of those intelligent government guardrails that the Roosevelt Administration put in place to get our economy back on track. If we accept the need for a minimum wage, then we must accept the need to periodically increase that wage to keep pace with the cost of living. If the minimum wage is a poverty wage, then it is not serving its function.

Forty-two percent means that our capitalist economy is in danger of running off the rails. Economic growth has reduced foraging areas for bees. A handful of large publicly traded companies have come to dominate our food systems, aggressively promoting the widespread use of systemic pesticides, a key culprit in colony collapse disorder.

Investors with their eye on the bottom line question what all of this will cost, burying their heads in their portfolios, focused on how a ban on pesticides or a rise in labor costs might affect stock prices. They ignore the larger costs – the damage to the underlying systems that sustain our economy and our lives.

It takes forward-looking corporate management teams to see beyond short-term costs and understand the broader trends. According to **Costco's** CEO, “Instead of minimizing wages, we know it's a lot more profitable in the long term to minimize employee turnover and maximize employee productivity, commitment and loyalty. We support efforts to increase the federal minimum wage.” **Lowe's**, after engagement by Friends of the Earth and socially responsible investors led by Domini, announced it will phase-out the class of pesticide linked to pollinator declines.

Another way is possible. Consider another perspective with the **Domini Social Equity Fund**.



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Before investing, consider the Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses. Contact us for a prospectus containing this information. Read it carefully. As of 3/31/15, the companies named above represented the following percentages of the Fund's portfolio: Costco (<0.01%), Lowe's (<0.01%). The Domini Social Equity Fund is not insured and is subject to market risks such as sector concentration and style risk. You may lose money. DSIL Investment Services LLC, Distributor. 5/15